Hafa Adai!

Happy New Year 2010

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
New Year's Eve celebration: Eat out or stay in?

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Bubbles
A string of exploding bubbles that started with the dot-coms and ended with mortgages and oil dominated 2000 to 2009.
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Lousy Year
Americans largely agree on two things: 2009 was a lousy year for the nation, and 2010 is likely to be better.
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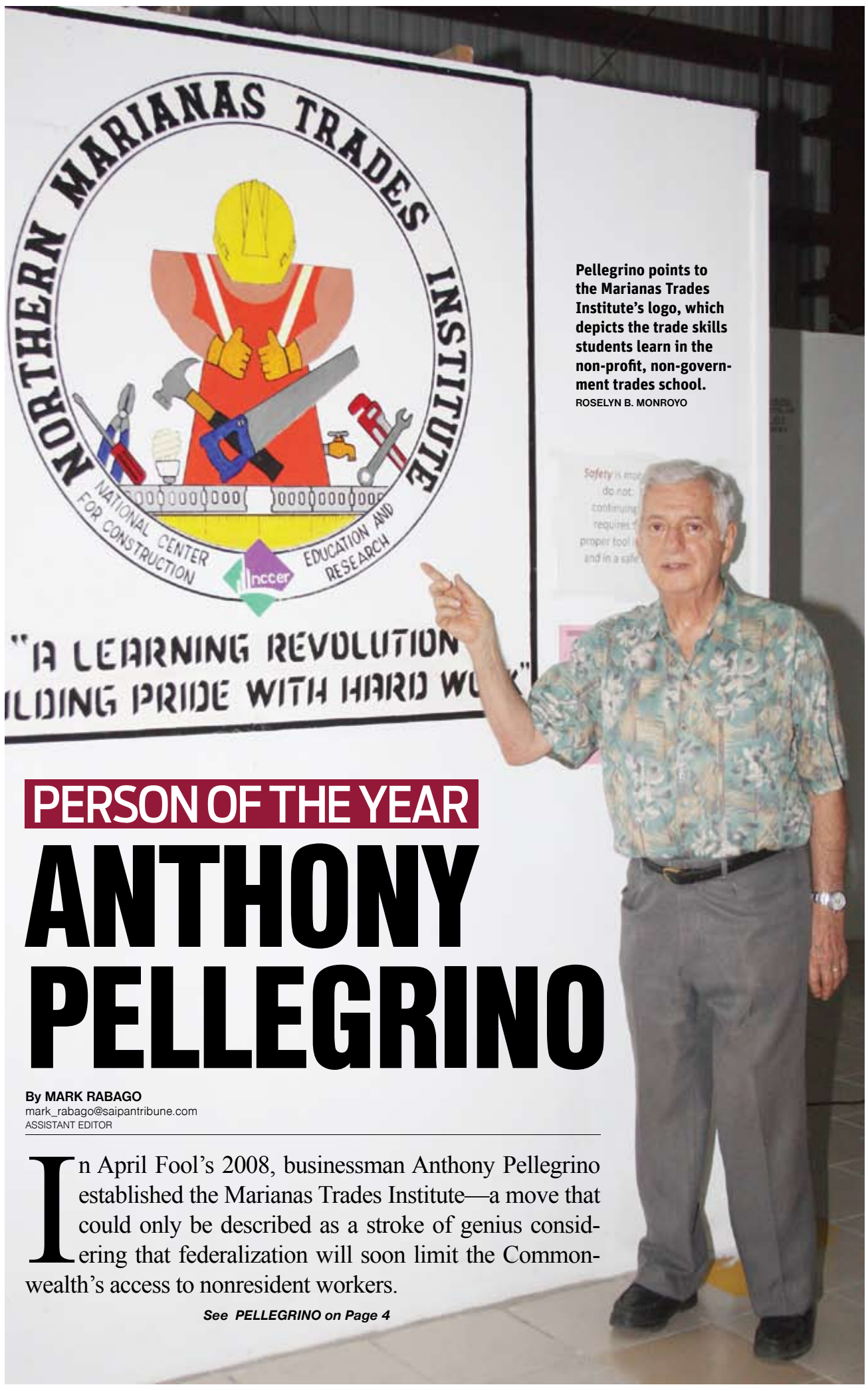

Pellegrino points to the Marianas Trades Institute's logo, which depicts the trade skills students learn in the non-profit, non-government trades school.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

PERSON OF THE YEAR

ANTHONY PELLEGRINO

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

In April Fool's 2008, businessman Anthony Pellegrino established the Marianas Trades Institute—a move that could only be described as a stroke of genius considering that federalization will soon limit the Commonwealth's access to nonresident workers.

See PELLEGRINO on Page 4

Newsmakers of the Year

Fitial

Hofschneider

The year 2009 was not just about the general election.

In between the election frenzy that gripped the islands happened other noteworthy events, and the islands' shakers and movers weren't just limited to a slew of politicians and their avid supporters. The year also saw a crop of other personalities that made headlines, that were lightning rods for controversy, that made names for themselves either because of the choices they've made or the paths they're on. Check out the newsmakers of the year on Page 2.

See story on Page 2

50 things that changed our lives

Was it only a decade ago that a blackberry was a mere warm season fruit? That green was, well, a color, and reality TV was that one show sandwiched between music videos on MTV?

There were, of course, huge political and social upheavals that roiled the world in the past decade, but there also were the gradual lifestyle changes that people do not always notice when they are happening; kind of like watching a child grow older. Here is a look at 50 things that changed our lives since the beginning of the millennium.

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Economy, Obama inauguration: Top stories of 2009. **PAGE 17**
Jackson's death voted top 2009 entertainment story. **PAGE 23**

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NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos

Who would have thought? Except for these two and their most ardent supporters, everyone else had written off the incumbent Covenant Party administration as history come Nov. 7, 2009, with, again, everyone else thinking that the CNMI would be inaugurating a new governor and

Fitial

Inos

lieutenant governor in January. How else can one draw a different conclusion, with Fitial's previous lieutenant governor in prison on corruption charges, emergency declaration after emergency declaration to handle a cascading series of crises, the promise of "Better Times" made hollow by a stubborn slump that foiled efforts to jump start the local economy, and the ranks of the jobless seemingly growing by the minute? The Fitial administration can thank its lucky stars that "everyone else" is not infallible. Political pundits credit Inos for providing the charm and charisma to balance out Fitial's capacity to make hard—and unpopular—decisions. Together, they managed to pull off one of the biggest upsets in Commonwealth political history, not only by getting reelected to another term, but also possibly becoming the CNMI's only chief executives who will serve a five-year term.

Rep. Heinz Hofschneider and House Speaker Arnold Palacios

Of course, where would the Fitial-Inos tandem be without these two? The high drama that was this year's general election

Hofschneider

Palacios

was largely because of the giant personalities that were battling it out for the islands' highest post. And it is without a doubt that the CNMI Republican Party brought out the big guns when it selected these two to face off with the Covenant Party standard bearers in the November election. Hofschneider, already a larger than life figure on Capital Hill, paired with Palacios, the incumbent speaker of the House of Representatives, made for a formidable duo fit to challenge the considerable machinery of an incumbent opponent. Palacios' easy-going charm was the perfect foil for the famously mercurial temperament of Hofschneider and it was a testament to the vitality of their campaign that they emerged as the top vote-getter in the Nov. 7 general election, despite the crowded pool of candidates running for governor and lieutenant governor. Had there been no required runoff election, we would have been celebrating the inauguration of Heinz and Arnold in January, instead of Ben and Eloy.

Jim Bell

The stocky old man that could, Jim Bell made a name for himself by being the first on record to swim the channel between Saipan and Tinian. At 71 years old, Bell managed to achieve a feat that even a 20-year-old would find daunting, crossing the channel thrice and preferring to make the journey in the company of predatory sharks, venomous jellyfishes, gentle manta rays and leisurely turtles, instead of taking the ferry or flying via Freedom Air as what the rest of us mortals would do. When that challenge palled, Jim took on a more arduous project, swimming the entire 45 miles of coast surrounding Saipan.

Bell

Jim also had a penchant for celebrating milestones in his life by taking to water. While serving in the U.S. Navy, he swam around the entire reef and shoreline of Guam about 28 years ago. When he retired in 1981, he celebrated by swimming the Saipan-Tinian channel. When he turned 70 on June 9, 2008, he swam from Tinian to Saipan.

When Jim disappeared on Oct. 17, 2009, he was attempting to finish his latest project: to swim the entire coastline of Tinian. Bell jumped off near Suicide Cliff on Tinian and his goal was to swim around the corner of the island and surface at Kammer Beach. He failed

Continued on Next Page

Tan Holdings and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas.
This year we join you in taking time to give thanks for the blessings of the year just passed, to rejoice in our children, and to enjoy the company of family and friends.
We look forward to working with our partners, organizations, and individuals in the new year of 2010.
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Happy Holidays and a safe and prosperous New Year!
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to show up and the search was called off after five days with no sign of the man.

Call him what you will: crazy, eccentric, superhuman, or just plain pigheaded. The fact is Jim showed us the limits of what human endurance can achieve, how age is no barrier to any goal we can imagine, and that old age is not the gray twilight zone that most of us fear but rather what we make of it. Jim has passed on but we would like to imagine that he's still out there, still swimming, still doing what he loved most to do.

Dr. Carmen Fernandez

Dr. Carmen Fernandez, the president of the Northern Marianas College, has created quite a stir at the CNMI's lone post-secondary institution, shaking up the college's staid façade and causing an uproar among its entrenched personalities. Credited with the restoration of NMC's accreditation with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, she has nevertheless ruffled feathers with her fiery personality and leadership style, causing a near en masse departure of many key officials and faculty at the college. It doesn't help that Fernandez prefers to keep her own counsel, making it hard for media to access her. This creates an artificial vacuum of information that, for good or ill, becomes filled with everyone else's side except hers. By refusing to explain herself and present her side of the matter, her detractors have a field day excoriating her to high heavens. The new leadership in the Board of Regents promises a tempestuous 2010 at the college and should make exciting news fodder in the year ahead.

Fernandez

Howard Willens and Deanne Siemer

This lawyer couple's history has become entwined with that of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Willens represented the Marianas Political Status Commission in negotiations with the U.S. regarding political status in 1972. He and Siemer also served as counsel to the First and Third Constitutional Conventions. These, however, weren't what merited their inclusion on this list of this year's newsmakers. Rather, Willens' role in the CNMI government's decision to sue the federal government over the takeover of the local immigration and labor systems and Siemer's unofficial role at the CNMI Department of Labor have riled up a lot of people, particularly their seeming lack of accountability to anyone except to the governor. Their concern for the Commonwealth cannot be discounted or denied, though. With a successful and lucrative practice in Washington D.C., this high profile couple have chosen to lend their legal expertise to the CNMI government because, as Siemer explained it, they believe that just because the federal government is big and powerful doesn't give it the right to trample on the rights of smaller states and impose its will on them.

Willens

Siemer

Tina Sablan

Where would the year be without Rep. Tina Sablan, whose incandescent smile hides a core made of steel? More popular among the islands' literati than among the hoi polloi, her penchant for and insistence on accountability, transparency, and frugality has earned her the scorn of some of her colleagues at the Legislature but adulation from many among the intelligentsia. This year, she took on the Fitial administration, seeking to make it explain where it was getting the money being used to fund the lawsuit against federalization. That fight took her all the way to the CNMI Superior Court, where she eventually succeeded in having the records opened for public inspection.

Sablan

A run for a position in the Senate failed—a fact lamented by many of her ardent supporters—but Sablan has assured that she is not going anywhere and her fight for better governance continues. This early, calls for Sablan to run for governor has echoed time and again but she just laugh it off. Whether that will happen will ultimately depend on whether CNMI voters want leaders they deserve or leaders they should have.

Judge Alex Munson

After more than 21 years as Chief Judge for the District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands, Alex R. Munson announced this year that he will retire effective Feb. 28, 2010. The 68-year-old Munson has been in the CNMI for 27 years, first arriving on Saipan Sept. 1, 1982, to serve as chief justice for the High Court of the Trust Territory.

Munson

Munson succeeded Alfred Laureta, who was the first Territorial District Judge for the District Court of the NMI from 1978 to 1988. Then-President Ronald Reagan nominated Munson to be the chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the NMI in 1988. Then-President Bill Clinton nominated Munson for a second 10-year term in 1998.

Munson said he and his wife Kathy had already moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, and he will be joining her there as soon as he retires. "We've lots of friends here. We enjoyed our time here. We will miss a lot of people and the culture," he said. "We are looking forward to a new chapter of our life."

PELLEGRINO

From Page 1

Pellegrino incorporated the non-profit, non-government trades school with the goal to train local residents to become skilled tradesmen and women and in the process improve the local labor pool and create job opportunities.

The 79-year-old former Chamber of Commerce president said the confluence of events—federalization, death of the garment industry, and lack of job opportunities for graduates of local schools—prompted him to establish the Marianas Trades Institute.

"I firmly believe that any country is only as strong as its citizens and its workforce. Sadly, Saipan has been receiving handouts from the U.S. since 1986. We did have the garment industry but it went bust in 2005. Everyday more and more people are on welfare. We now have more than 7,000 families on welfare that translates to almost 20,000 people. And I don't see anybody building trades," he said.

Pellegrino also noticed that every year the CNMI graduates some 700 students, but to his own estimate only 200 or 250 eventually enroll in college.

"Maybe 100 or less go to military. The 400 or 500 remaining, what do they do? Multiply that over 10 years you have 4,000 people or 5,000 people with no jobs and no skills," he said.

That was all the reason he needed to establish the Marianas Trades Institute on April 1, 2008, with $90,000 seed money from his own pocket.

Three short months later, Pellegrino said the trade school began its first class with 30-35 students at a private residence in Dandan.

That early, though, it was already evident that Marianas Trades Institute would need to move to a bigger facility as teaching theory and not hands-on training just wouldn't cut it for Pellegrino and company.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Anthony Pellegrino, seated center, pose with students of Marianas Trades Institute in Lower Base.

Expansion

In late 2008 the trade school found an ideal home at a former garment factory in Lower Base. The move to the 35,000-square-foot warehouse allowed Marianas Trades Institute to grow to more than 170 students and expand from its original carpentry, plumbing, and masonry programs and incorporate automotive, electrical, sewing, and even the culinary arts to its curriculum.

Pellegrino said plans to add welding and air-conditioning courses are also afoot even as the Marianas Trade Institutes has secured partnerships with the local food stamp office, the Department of Corrections (to help former prisoners start a new life), and the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance.

All these developments promise to swell the school's student population to 220 by the middle of January 2010.

Along the way, Pellegrino, with the help of education director Victorino S. Cepeda, also was able to get for the trades school certification from the National Center for Construction Education and Research through the Guam Contractors Association Trade Academy of Guam.

Pellegrino said that NCCER accreditation is important because it assures that graduates of the Marianas Trades Institute are certified to work anywhere in the U.S. mainland.

Beyond the classroom

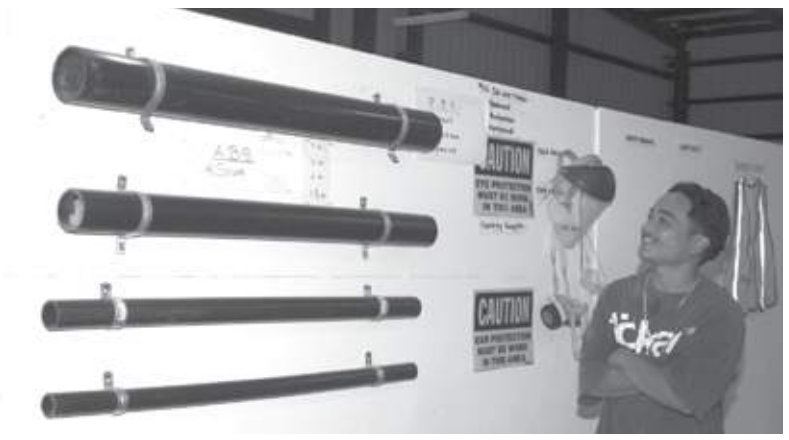
Unlike other institutions of learning, the Marianas Trades Institute's responsibility to its students also goes beyond the limits of the classroom.

Pellegrino said while they are studying in the evening, the trades school encourages its student to work in the private sector in the morning as an apprentice or an assistant to a tradesman so they can have proper on-the-job training.

"Every two weeks, we track working students and assess them. We also try to get feedback from their employers. As long as you're a student here, we don't want to cut the umbilical cord," said Pellegrino.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Students of Marianas Trades Institute's electrical class check one of the fuses on the display board.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Marianas Trades Institute students looks at the various pipes on display in the school's plumbing class.

He also boasts that the trades school also teaches its students how to make resumes, proper grooming, and interview techniques to improve their chances of landing a job.

Fruits of labor

For 34-year-old former immigration officer Salmino Santos, the trades school has given him an opportunity to learn a craft that he really is passionate about.

"I've always been interested in how things are built. As a little boy I saw the different phases of how Hafadai Beach Hotel was built. I always thought that it was supernatural to see something happen out of nowhere, only to find out that it's through the hands of men and trades people that these happen," he said.

Santos, who is taking up carpentry and plumbing, thanked Pellegrino for establishing the trades school.

"I give Mr. Pellegrino a lot of praises for coming up with the idea of forming a trade school. Not many people will even do something like this. There's always been talk that we need a trades school on the island but nobody ever did it and he's the first to do it," he said.

Former U.S. Marine Pasqual K. De Leon, for his part, said the trades school should've been established long ago.

"There's a lot of jobs that we need to do and with these type of programs, like electrical, they are nationally certified so we can work in the mainland," he said. "It also gives us locals the chance to get the training we need for jobs the island needs. I'm also working right now and the trade school gives me a chance to study and work at the same time."

The trade school has also made trailblazers out of 18-year-old Camille Celis and Hamanda Kikku, who both want to become electricians.

Both are interested in electronics and wanted to enroll at the trade school to broaden their horizons. They can very well be on their way to become the islands' first women electricians.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Marianas Trades Institute instructor Bill Kintz shows cinder-blocks, where students learn construction lessons at the trade school.

Not only students have come to admire Pellegrino's vision for the trade school, as House Healers owner and Marianas Trades Institute instructor Bill Kintz acknowledged that he too was able to learn a new craft through the trades school.

"Mr. Pellegrino is not only the guiding light, he is the solar flair who had the vision for the school. Our students are not the only one learning here, because as an instructor I'm also learning something new here everyday. I never thought that I would be an educator myself but through Mr. Pellegrino and the [Marianas] Trades Institute I'm gaining that experience," he said.

Pellegrino's selflessness was also not lost on Cepeda, who said that the businessman actually doesn't want any credit for establishing the trades school.

"He came up with the idea for the school but he has kept reminding everyone that when he established the Marianas Trades Institute, he doesn't want it to be called Tony Pellegerino's school. Rather he wants it to be called the entire community's school," he said.

More dreams

Pellegrino's dream doesn't stop with the trades school, as he is already planning to establish a woodworking shop on the lot beside the Marianas Trades Institute.

"It will be owned and operated by graduates of the school," he said, adding that he is also more than willing to teach them how to set up a business.

"I would show you how to start your own business, I've done it the past 45 years," said Pellegrino, who owns Saipan Ice and Water Co., Saipan Sea Ventures, Inc., Saipan Aquaculture, Inc., among others.

For Pellegrino, he established the Marianas Trades Institute not to defy doubters who said it couldn't be done. For him, the trade school was simply what the community needed.

"We have a need in this community and the need is for skilled and trained workers. The community has been good to me and this is a way for me to give back to the community."

Shooting rampage stuns CNMI

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The year saw the unimaginable happen in the CNMI when a man went on a shooting rampage in Kannat Tabla and in Marpi, killing five, including himself, and wounding eight others.

On Nov. 20, the gunman, identified as Li Zhong Ren, shot four persons, including two children, and injured another child at a house next to the shooting range in Kannat Tabla.

The family members were preparing for the birthday celebration of 4-year-old Dolores Naputi when Li opened fire. Dolores survived, but her father and 1-year-old sister Korina were killed. Two other relatives, including 5-year-old Vince Larry Rosario, also died.

Li proceeded on a van to the Last Command Post where he opened fire on a group of Korean tourists, wounding seven people. He went to Banzai cliff where he tried to burn his identification cards and other documents in the van. He then walked to the edge of the cliff and shot himself under the chin.

Li Zhong Ren

The shooting stunned residents and caused panic, mainly due to exaggerated reports circulating via phone calls and text messages.

International media, including CNN, were busy calling the Department of Public Safety, the governor's office, other government offices, and the local media, to get details and reactions.

Li left several notes that indicated he had planned the shooting. Li was the caretaker of the shooting range, which has been closed for operation early this year.

The notes were left in plain view for police to find and the "incident seems premeditated."

Investigators said the motive may be related to issues about money and the suspect's emotional frustration.

Police said Li attempted to destroy his personal identification and documents by setting it on fire on the passenger seat of the van. The van was parked by the cliff line of Banzai Cliff.

Besides DPS, other law enforcement agencies that joined the probe included the CNMI Immigration Division, CNMI Labor Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division.

Li used different guns in the attack. The victims were shot with different weapons including a .223 caliber rifle and .410 shotgun.

Li had over 750 rounds of ammunition, including .223 caliber, .410 shotgun rounds, and .22 Magnum ammunition in the van.

Li had a valid entry permit as he was an employee of the shooting range. The range was closed in April 2009.

Police determined that the gunman fired more than 40 times, including the single bullet that killed himself.

Villagomez, Santos couple tried and convicted

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The trial and subsequent conviction of then Lt. Gov. Timothy Villagomez and couple James and Joaquina Santos in the Rydlyme corruption case was undoubtedly one of the biggest stories of 2009.

The jury selection in the U.S. District Court for the NMI began on March 30 and the trial of the CNMI's most powerful government official ever tried in court—then Lt. Gov. Villagomez and his co-defendants—immediately followed for bribery and wire fraud charges.

The trial ended on April 24 with Villagomez and the Santoses found guilty of all charges. The 12 jurors reached a unanimous verdict after deliberating for only a few hours. Including the one day jury selection, the trial lasted just 20 days.

Villagomez

After the verdict came out, Villagomez resigned as lieutenant governor. Gov. Benigno R. Fitial named Eloy Inos as his new lieutenant governor three days later, on Nov. 27, 2009.

The three defendants subsequently filed numerous motions, including a request for a new trial but Judge Alex R. Munson denied the motions.

On Aug. 5, Munson sentenced Villagomez to seven years and three months in prison for his role in the corruption case. The judge imposed six years and six months in prison each for former Commerce Secretary James A. Santos and former Commonwealth Ports Authority human resources manager Joaquina V. Santos, for their involvement in the scheme to defraud the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and the United States.

Villagomez and the Santos couple appealed their conviction and sentences to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge Munson allowed the defendants to remain free while a federal prison facility where they will serve their sentences was then being designated.

On Aug. 24, Villagomez and the couple were flown out from Saipan to begin serving their sentences in federal prison. Villagomez was taken to the Federal Correctional Institution in Phoenix, Arizona, Joaquina Santos was brought to the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, while her husband was taken to the United States Penitentiary-Victorville in Alelanto, California.

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As Arnold and I want to thank all our supporters for their tireless effort during the campaign season. We thoroughly enjoyed your company and were honored by your willingness to share time with us in conversation over a cup of coffee, at family get-togethers, at barbeques, on birthdays, at weddings, and the more solemn funeral services. For the people of Rota and Tinian, we extend a special thank you for the remarkable hurdles that we were able to clear in this election. Change is coming to our communities. It will take more time than we hoped, but it is important that we look to the future and work together to realize the possibilities that lay ahead, not only for ourselves or our families and friends but for our community. We must restate that we owe you a debt of gratitude we will never be able to repay. We wish everyone good health and good fortune in the New Year! And we look forward to seeing you soon.
Happy New Year!
Heinz & Arnold

CNMI loses immigration control in 2009

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

At the stroke of midnight on Nov. 28, 2009, the CNMI lost control of its immigration to the federal government, creating another chapter in the islands' 34-year relationship with the United States.

The CNMI is the second to the last U.S. territory to control its own immigration. American Samoa still has jurisdiction over its borders.

Federal control came about as a result of Public Law 110-229 or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act signed by President Bush on May 8, 2008.

The so-called federalization means the CNMI is now subject to the same immigration laws as all U.S. states and territories, like its neighbor Guam.

Federalization happened more than three weeks after the CNMI marked the 23rd year on Nov. 4 since former U.S. President Ronald Regan proclaimed that the U.S. trusteeship agreement under the United Nations was no longer applicable to the CNMI and, under the terms of the Covenant, declared qualified residents U.S. citizens.

Federal takeover was originally set for June 1 but on March 31, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano delayed the transition to full implementation of U.S. immigration laws in the CNMI by 180 days—the maximum allowed by law.

This brought the new implementation date to Nov. 28, 2009.

When that day came, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection—one of the agencies under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—took over immigration checks at the Saipan and Rota international airports. The first passengers to be to be processed by CBP officers at 1:11am were those on a Northwest Airlines flight from Japan.

CBP officers from all parts of the U.S. manned the 14 immigration booths at the Saipan airport on that historic day. Federal officials also made their presence on the islands felt before, during and after the official federal takeover.

But for the more than 30 CNMI immigration officers, federalization meant either losing their jobs or being transferred to other local agencies such as the Department of Corrections or the Division of Customs Service.

Federalization would have prevented Chinese and Russian tourists from entering the CNMI without a U.S. visa, but DHS' Napolitano used her parole authority on Oct. 21 to allow a visa-free entry of these tourists until DHS issues a final rule on the joint Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program.

However, diplomatic and immigration concerns led to the suspension of charter flights from China since Nov. 28, and resumed only on Dec. 18.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, who sued the U.S. government over federalization, was not able to persuade a federal court judge that the so-called federalization violates the Covenant between the United States and the CNMI.

But Fitial didn't lose everything in his federalization lawsuit. Judge Paul Friedman issued on Nov. 25 a preliminary injunction preventing DHS from implementing its interim final rule on the CNMI transitional worker program until the public is given enough time to comment on it.

The DHS rule creates a Transitional Worker Visa category, a new nonimmigrant visa classification under the Immigration and Nationality Act using the admission code CW-1 for the principal transitional worker and CW-2 for dependents. "CW" stands for "Commonwealth transitional worker."

Two weeks later, DHS reopened and extended for another 30 days or up to Jan. 8, 2010 the public comment period for the interim final rule.

While the governor conceded that the CNMI does not have the necessary resources to control its own borders amid the U.S. war against terrorism, he insists that the federal government should back off from controlling the CNMI's labor system.

It was also only on Nov. 28 that DHS started announcing options for nonresidents to be able to exit and re-enter the CNMI using their valid CNMI entry and work permit, by applying for either a parole or advance parole with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

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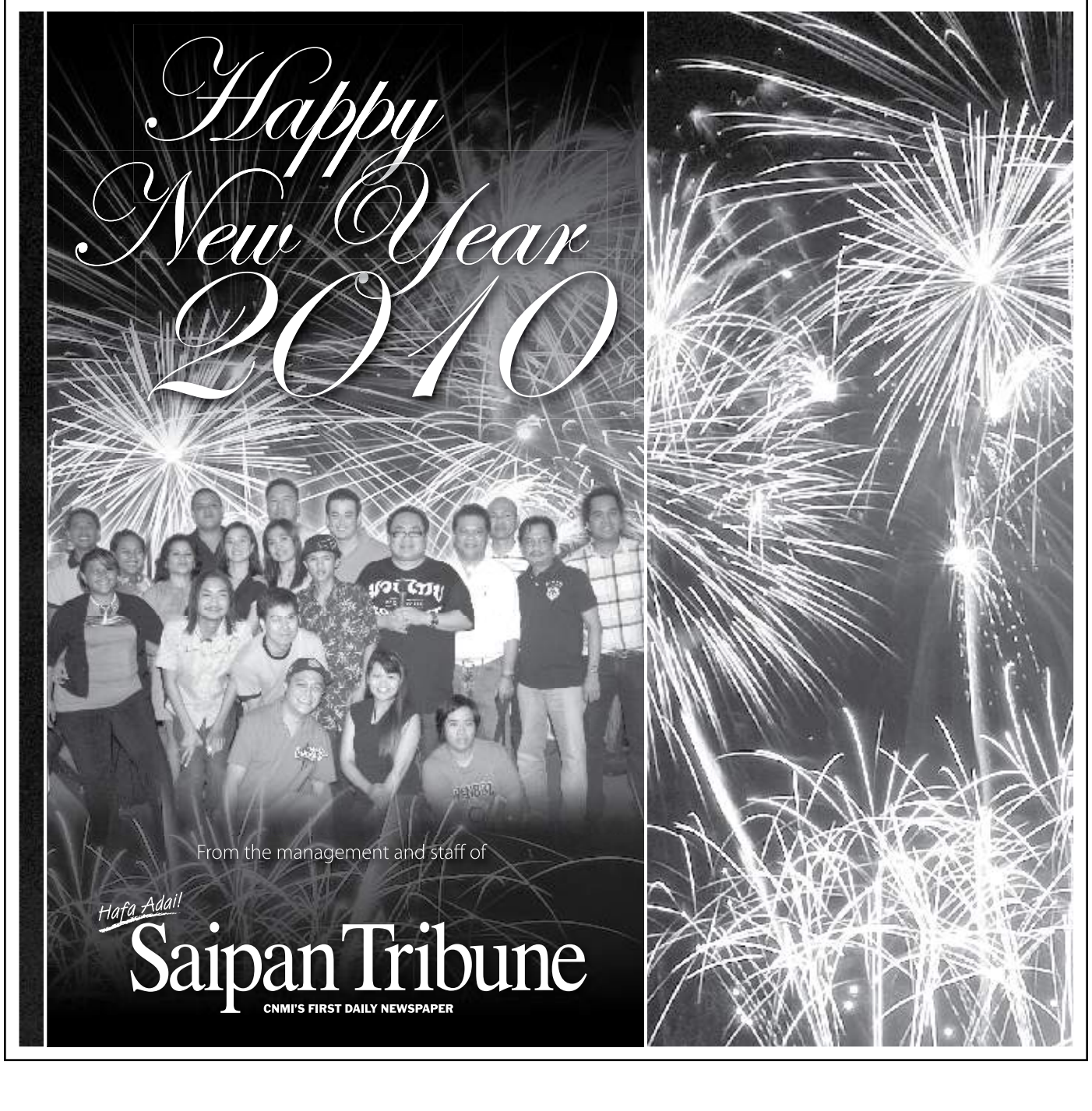

Jim Bell disappears

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The year witnessed the disappearance of the amazing James Bell, a 71-year-old resident who hugged local news headlines several times by swimming or attempting to swim the dangerous channels between the Marianas Islands.

Bell

On Oct. 17, Bell jumped off near Suicide Cliff on Tinian between 11am and 12 noon as part of his goal to swim the entire Tinian coastline in several stages. On that day, he had intended to swim around the corner of the island and surface at Kammer Beach.

When Bell failed to show up at Kammer Beach later that afternoon, Tinian Department of Public Safety began search and rescue operations.

It was Tinian lawyer Janet King who had accompanied Bell to his jump off point because she offered long ago to take pictures of him in the water.

King recalled that Bell stood staring at the water calmly for a good five minutes, then he jumped. When he hit the water, he swam away from the cliffs and never looked back.

On Oct. 21, the federal and local enforcement agencies' search, rescue, and recovery operations ended. The swimmer was never found.

Donna Bell, Jim's former wife, said that Jim was always being followed by magnificent sea turtles in his adventures in the ocean.

The stories of his encounters with sea turtles were among the most amazing sea stories that Bell would tell of all of his outrageous adventures when swimming in the ocean, according to Donna.

Terri Clawson, a friend of Bell, said that he had stated on several occasions that he had no other wish than to be buried at sea.

"Jim Bell loved to swim. He was happy when he was swimming. He knew that he might lose his life swimming and he was okay with that," Clawson said.

In July 1981, Bell marked his retirement from the U.S. Navy by swimming alone from Saipan to Tinian. The effort took him 12 hours.

Fitial re-elected in NMI's first gubernatorial runoff race

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

It's a sweet victory for Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, not only for winning his re-election bid, but also for being the first—and probably the only—governor in CNMI history who will serve a five-year term instead of the regular four years because of a newly ratified legislative initiative requiring general elections to be held only on even-numbered years.

Whoever succeeds Fitial in 2015 will go back to serving the regular four-year term for governor.

Fitial, 64, is also the first to win the CNMI's first gubernatorial runoff election held on Nov. 23, two weeks after the Nov. 7 general elections.

Were it not for a new law requiring a runoff election if none of the gubernatorial candidates got at least 50 percent plus one of the votes cast and counted, Fitial and Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos of the Covenant Party would have lost the four-way gubernatorial race to Republicans Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider (R-Saipan) and House Speaker Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan)—by a mere eight votes.

The eight-vote lead was the closest gubernatorial race in CNMI history.

Voter turnout stood at only 86 percent, which was much lower than the 93 percent recorded in the 2005 gubernatorial race when Fitial edged Hofschneider by 99 votes.

Inos, for his part, is the first lieutenant governor to be appointed in the history of the Commonwealth.

Fitial appointed the former Finance secretary to the post in April to replace Timothy P. Villagomez, who was convicted in federal court on corruption charges.

"It feels different to have a 'direct mandate' from the people. This is very rewarding," said Inos, who came from a poor family but he and his sibling persevered and went on to become leaders in the CNMI.

Two other independent teams ran in the general elections.

Businessman Juan "Pan" T. Guerrero and his running mate, House Floor Leader Joseph N. Camacho, received 2,643 votes, while former senator Ramon "Kumoi" S. Deleon Guerrero and his running mate, Dr. David M. Borja, got 1,101 votes.

After the general elections, Camacho and Borja supported Fitial-Inos, while Deleon Guerrero backed Hofschneider-Palacios. Guerrero did not endorse any of the two candidates in the runoff race.

In the Nov. 23 runoff election, Hofschneider-Palacios lost to Fitial-Inos by 501 votes.

The Fitial-Inos ticket received 6,313 votes, while the Hofschneider-Palacios camp got 5,812 votes.

However, the final tally wouldn't be known until Dec. 7, when all remaining absentee ballots were counted by the Commonwealth Election Commission.

But the Fitial-Inos camp was confident they would maintain their lead even after the absentee ballots were counted.

When the remaining absentee ballots were counted on Dec. 7, Fitial's 501-vote lead over Hofschneider narrowed to 370.

The 2009 final, official election tally showed that the Fitial-Inos camp received 6,610 votes over the 6,240 votes that the Hofschneider-Palacios ticket received.

Fitial and Inos thanked their opponents for running "a formidable race," and the voters for once again giving them their vote of confidence to lead the CNMI for the next five years.

Fitial, who sued the U.S. government over federalization, is only the second governor in CNMI history to be re-elected. The first one was former Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio, a Republican, who served for two consecutive terms from Jan. 11, 1982 to Jan. 8, 1990. Tenorio secured a third term in office when he ran again in 1997, and served from Jan. 12, 1998 to Jan. 14, 2002.

Fitial is also only the sixth governor to serve in the history of the CNMI.

Fitial and Inos's inauguration is set for Jan. 11, 2010, at 3pm, at the Saipan World Resort in Susupe.

Governor declares 3 emergencies in 2009

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial issued three emergency declaration throughout the year, taking full executive control of agencies that included the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., the Department of Public Health, and the Tinian municipality.

This provided Fitial not only full control of these agencies' operations but it also suspended regulatory provisions on procurements and the authority to reprogram all available funds to address the concerns.

In January, Fitial extended for the nth time the emergency declaration for CUC as a result of its poor condition brought about by the dilapidated state of the island's power plants and lack of skilled professionals to fix the critical problems in the power facilities.

These emergency declarations also cited the noncompliance of the utilities firm with federal stipulated orders, the increased power rates, successive blackouts, and the unstable condition of the islands' sewer system.

To resolve some of these concerns, Fitial lifted the hiring restrictions on non-U.S. citizen professionals at CUC so it could bring in the needed manpower to fix the problems.

The first emergency declaration for CUC was in August 2008. The declaration was thereafter extended every 30 days and remains in place to date.

Last October, Fitial made two successive emergency declarations.

Fitial proclaimed a state of disaster for Tinian on Oct. 13 after determining that the island's deteriorating outer breakwater walls and piers pose a public danger. The declaration allowed him to reprogram funds for the repair and rehabilitation of the outer walls and piers, costing $2 to $3 million.

Fitial's declaration came four days after Tinian Mayor Jose San Nicolas declared his own emergency in the municipality.

Tinian lawmakers disclosed that the island needed $45 million to be able to repair and rebuild the island's breakwater, which was built soon after World War II. However, the priority was its outer wall and piers. There was $15 million CIP money that was being eyed for the project.

Officials said typhoons severely deteriorated the outer wall and piers, leaving the inner dock of Tinian harbor vulnerable.

A few days later, the CNMI's health care system was also declared under emergency. The governor ordered Department of Public Health officials to submit a written plan to move the CNMI from its present medical emergency status to an acceptable level of care.

Like other declarations, the decision will pave the way for the hiring of more doctors from outside the CNMI.

In justifying this declaration, the governor described the current system of health care delivery as overtaxed, with less than the needed number of physicians and nurses available to serve the islands' medical needs. The increasing number of off-island medical referrals was also cited as a fiscal threat to the economic stability of the Executive Branch.

Happy New Year
2010
To the people of the CNMI,
We would like to wish all a joyful year
with continued success and prosperity.
Governor Benigno R. Fitial & Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos

CNMI's first US delegate sworn into office

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The CNMI marked a lot of historic firsts in 2009, led by the swearing in of Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan as the CNMI's first non-voting delegate to the U.S. Congress on Jan. 6, 2009.

Before then, the CNMI was the only U.S. territory that did not have representation in the U.S. Congress, 33 years after the islands became a part of the American family.

"Today is a landmark day in Commonwealth history. Today our islands become full-fledged members of the American political family," Sablan (D-MP) said at the time.

Sablan

With his wife Andrea, children, family and friends as among witnesses, Sablan took his oath of office at 2:20pm on Jan. 6 in Washington, D.C. or at 5:20am on Jan. 7 Saipan time, along with other members of the 111th Congress.

Sablan, who served in the CNMI's 3rd Legislature and was a former executive director of the Commonwealth Election Commission, described his first day as the CNMI's first member of the U.S. House of Representatives as a "humbling" experience.

Former President Bush signed U.S. Public Law 110-229 or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act on May 8, 2008. Besides applying federal immigration law to the CNMI effective Nov. 28, 2009, the law also allowed for the election of the CNMI's first delegate to the U.S. Congress.

Sablan, who will turn 55 on Jan. 19, 2010, beat seven other candidates in the Nov. 4, 2008 historic election.

Right after assuming his post, Sablan and his staff began work on federal stimulus funding. But among the criticisms hurled against Sablan is stealing the spotlight from some local government officials and employees when it comes to securing some American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant funding, but his office has been saying that Sablan's office is the first one to receive ARRA notifications involving the CNMI and without his work, the CNMI would have lost out on some of these badly needed funds.

In February, Sablan introduced his first two pieces of legislation; one of which is H.R. 934, which seeks to convey up to 3 miles of submerged lands to the CNMI, similar to what Guam, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa have in place.

He does not have his own car in Washington, D.C. Instead, he rides the metro train going to and from work seven days a week and lives by himself in a nondescript studio-type apartment.

Sablan also worked with federal officials and agencies to advance CNMI interests as they crafted policies and rules in connection with the federalization of local immigration, as well on issues such as parole and advance parole for nonresident workers and Chinese and Russian tourists.

Through Sablan's efforts, the first congressionally requested earmarks amounting to $1.35 million have been provided to the CNMI. These earmarks were part of the $447 billion omnibus spending bill for Fiscal Year 2010 that President Obama signed on Dec. 16.

The seven projects funded included the Garapan public market which got $200,000 and described as "awful" by former Republican presidential candidate John McCain.

At the request of Sablan, several key members of the U.S House of Representatives have also visited the CNMI.

He is a member of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife, and Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. Sablan is also a member of 15 caucuses, including the powerful Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

Now in the middle of his two-year term, Sablan has set his sights on re-election.

Swine flu outbreak reaches NMI

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The global pandemic called the H1N1 influenza virus had been going full blast in other countries for several months now, with near daily reports of increasing death tolls and more nations being added to the list of those with active infections. The CNMI, however, seemed miraculously spared from the scourge, with no reports of anyone being infected on the island.

That miracle didn't last long, though. In August this year, the Department of Public Health confirmed that two patients have contracted the virus: a 16-year-old boy and a tourist from Japan. DPH admitted that it has been seeing the symptoms of the disease on island but it only made the confirmation after receiving word from a laboratory in Texas.

The number soon rose to six just a month after, to 65 in the following days. To date, there have been 71 confirmed cases of H1N1 infection in the CNMI. The miracle, however, is that there have been no H1N1-related deaths so far on the islands. In Guam, there have already been two such cases.

At the moment, the CNMI remains on heightened alert, Phase 5, with health officials keeping a vigilant eye on the spread of the infection. All samples are brought to a San Antonio, Texas laboratory to ensure that every case is well accounted for.

DPH continue to assure the public that it has an adequate supply of the vaccines intended to protect residents from the virus.

The CNMI has been allocated 56,000 H1N1 flu vaccines. So far it has already received 16,000 doses—both actual shots and flu mists. The CNMI expects to get all the doses early next year.

Latest hospital records show that nearly 6,000 residents, mostly children, have already received the H1N1 vaccines. As of early this month, a total of 3,556 elementary children in both private and public schools were provided the free vaccines while 2,135 doses were administered by private providers and outreach programs.

Last week, the remaining available doses were given out to the public.

PUBLIC NOTICE

THE **BOARD OF REGENTS REGULAR MEETING** THAT RECESSED ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2009 AT 6:40PM WILL RESUME ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2009 AT 3:30PM IN THE BOR CONFERERNCE ROOM AT THE NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE.

Regular Meeting of the Board of Regents
Board of Regents Conference room, NMC - Saipan Campus
Wednesday, December 30, 2009
3:30pm

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
  a. Roll Call
  b. Review and Adoption of Agenda
  c. Election of Officers
  d. Review and Adoption of Minutes
    1. September 24, 2009 – Regular meeting
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. REPORTS
  a. Associated Students of NMC
  b. Staff Senate
  c. Faculty Senate
  d. President
    1. CFAO Financial Report
  e. BOR Standing Committees
    1. Fiscal Committee
      a. Procurement Policy Revision
      b. Board Resolution No. 2009 -05: To designate the President and CFAO to be signatories to bank accounts.
    2. Personnel Committee
      a. HR Policy Revision
    3. Program Committee
      a. Proposed Fiscal Year 2011 Budget and Substantive Change Proposal for Rehabilitation and Human Services Program
    4. Legislative Committee
IV. OLD BUSINESS
  a. WASC Accreditation Update
V. EXECUTIVE SESSION
  (At any time during the scheduled meeting the Board of Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential)
VI. ADJOURNMENT

/s/Dr. Carmen Fernandez
Executive Secretary, BOR
December 25, 2009
Date

COMMONWEALTH ELECTION COMMISSION

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
P.O. Box 500470 Saipan. MP 96950-0470
Tel: (670) 664.VOTE / Fax: (670) 664-8689
http://www.votecnmi.gov.mp/

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC §9910 (a) and (b), the Commonwealth Election Commission, hereby give notice that the Commonwealth Election Commission will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2010, at the Commonwealth Election Commission office in Susupe, Saipan. Additional information concerning this meeting is available at the Office of the Election Commission, Susupe, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Matters
  a. Roll call
  b. Adoption of agenda

II. Executive Director's Report

III. New Business

  a. Civil Action No. 09-0463E

IV. Miscellaneous

V. Adjournment

/s/ FRANCES M. SABLAN
Chairwoman

(The Commission, pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, may vote to meet in executive session to consult legal counsel and discuss personnel matters.)

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 1, 2003

Top Stories of the Year: Nature Roars Twice
Mother Nature gave the Marianas, especially Rota and Guam, two of her most destructive forces-Typhoon Chata'an on July 4 and Supertyphoon Pongsona on Dec. 8-that left the islands badly damaged, and its people scrambling in darkness and in deep grief over the lost of millions of dollars in property and livelihood. Chata'an carried a maximum sustained winds of 65mph with high gusts. It left more than 20 people dead and over 30 injured in Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia. Pongsona, meanwhile, had roared into the Marianas with winds in excess of 180mph, leaving more than 1,000 homes on Guam and Rota leveled to the ground. Miraculously, no deaths have been attributed to the typhoon, said to be the worst to ever hit the region in three decades.

Delayed Rebates and Refunds
Northern Marianas taxpayers heard the saddest news in the most inappropriate time of the year. After months of anticipation-and more days of anticipation-Gov. Juan N. Babauta broke the bad news that rebates and refunds won't be out in time for Christmas. He made the announcement Christmas Eve. Bank of Guam withdrew its proposal to loan out $19 million, which the government intended to use for payment of long overdue rebates and refunds before Christmas, citing constitutional and statutory issues. Based on the fiscal year 2003 CNMI Financial Status report presented by the Department of Finance, the government owes $19.6 million in individual tax refunds and rebates to nearly 40,000 taxpayers.

January 1, 2004

Person of the Year: The Volunteer
They work long, odd hours without pay. They get called up in the middle of the night, very early in the morning, and most of the time smack dab in the middle of their days off-the only time of day that they could truly call their own. They slave away for most of the time without the recognition that they rightfully deserve. And they do all this with a cheerful smile, a delighted laugh, and a self-deprecation that says they'd rather work behind the scene-unknown, inconspicuous, and truly effective. They are the CNMI's volunteers and this year, the Saipan Tribune has chosen them to be its Person of the Year. Volunteering, after all, exemplifies the highest ideals of service to the community and, by extension, the world. It is the helping hand in Luke 10:25-37, when Jesus narrated the parable of the Good Samaritan in response to a question on who our neighbors are. It is putting into vigorous action John F. Kennedy's call to arms when he exhorted all Americans to ask not what their country can do for them but what they can do for their country. It is seeing what needs to be done and actually rolling up one's sleeves to do it.

January 1, 2005

US military ships to aid in relief efforts
A U.S. carrier battle group steamed toward Indonesia's Sumatra island Friday to spearhead an unprecedented multinational military effort to assist the survivors of last weekend's quake and tsunamis. Naval ships prepositioned on Saipan reportedly left the island to join the relief mission in Thailand. The Associated Press reported that another U.S. marine strike group was sailing westward from the Pacific territory of Guam for the seas off Sri Lanka to buttress the burgeoning global drive to bring water and medical supplies to millions of increasingly desperate people. The AP report also said naval ships from Singapore and Australia were prepared to sail yesterday for Aceh, Sumatra's northernmost province and the area closest to the epicenter of the quake.

CNMI, ARC to help tsunami victims
The CNMI government and the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter intend to organize relief efforts to help the tsunami victims in Asia. Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente said yesterday that the Executive Brach will discuss the matter with ARC executive director John Hirsh on Monday. "We'd like to contribute in whatever way we can to help the victims. What happened was very tragic. Our sympathies go out to the families and individuals grieving. We'd like to help and we'll encourage the community to help," said Benavente. Reports said that the death toll across 12 countries hit by the tsunamis may reach a quarter of a million. As of yesterday, the number was already at over 118,000.

2009 challenges NMC stability

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The year 2009 was a shaky one for the only community college on island after the institution's accreditation became mired in uncertainty and its leadership challenged by compounded "political" issues on campus that created factions among various groups.

As early as January, the Northern Marianas College was hard at work to comply with all the requirements set by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for its re-accreditation. From a probation status in 2007, the college's standing had been placed on a more severe sanction of show-cause, extended anew when it failed to address all the recommended actions of WASC.

NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez was brought on board in 2007 to address the two remaining concerns, out of the six recommendations, by the accrediting commission.

It was during the July 4th festivities when college officials announced the good news to the community: NMC successfully reaffirmed its accreditation, effective until 2012. The decision was made during the WASC assembly in June 2009. WASC lauded the significant improvements initiated by the college.

Even as this was happening, though, Fernandez's leadership was challenged by criticisms and a number of grievances relating to her management style.

There were eight total grievances filed by some members of the faculty and the then-Student Council president Ivan Mereb against the college management. However, these complaints did not formally reach the president's table pending action in lower-level management.

The faculty also raised concerns about the Board of Regents' decision to give Fernandez a new four-year term after the expiration of her original two-year contract in May.

Controversy over the resignation of regent Agnes McPhetres also marred the college stability when the former regent accused Fernandez of providing information to WASC that tainted her image with accreditation officials.

In the latter part of the year, faculty members expressed outrage when the contracts of some long-time employees were not renewed, with no reasons given for the non-renewals. Among those let go were department chairs Mark Haag and Glenn Keaton, among the oldest faculty staff on campus. The latest on the list was well-respected instructor Sam McPhetres.

The "exit" and "departure" of other college employees were also believed due to the management practices of the current leadership at NMC.

On Dec. 18, the NMC Faculty Assembly gave a vote of "no confidence" in Fernandez's leadership. They also voted to reject the proposed HR policies by the management. The Faculty Senate also rejected the indefinite contract proposed by the management, citing "unacceptable" provisions.

A group of students also circulated a petition asking the president to justify McPhetres' nonrenewal.

The college capped the year with the election of a new chairperson for the Board of Regents. Lawyer Janet King was chosen to lead the board over previous board chair Charles Cepeda.

Prominent personalities pass away

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The year marked the passing of several prominent personalities who had made a name for themselves on the islands for their public service.

Among those who passed away were former Office on Aging director Howard Macaranas, former Northern Marianas College president Antonio Deleon Guerrero, former Fitial administration's designated special adviser for indigenous affairs Gonzalo Q. Santos, former Education Commissioner Dr. Rita A. Inos, and former Rep. Herman T. Palacios.

Macaranas, 53, was the incumbent Aging director when he was taken to the Commonwealth Health Center on April 13 after suffering a stroke. He died three days later due to a massive cerebral hemorrhagic stroke.

The Fitial administration stated that Macaranas managed the Aging Center with professionalism and compassion.

Deleon Guerrero, Dr. Inos, and Santos passed away in the month of August.

Santos died at the age of 68 on Aug. 4 from lung cancer at the Guam Memorial Hospital. He was the governor's special adviser for indigenous affairs since the Fitial administration assumed office in 2006.

Prior to his appointment with the administration, Santos served as a teacher and principal at the Public School System.

Santos was said to have had a sincere concern for the indigenous culture and traditions. He had been working on projects such as the Chamorro language dictionary and the exploration and documentation of traditional Chamorro herbs and medicine.

Deleon Guerrero, 52, died on Aug. 5 after suffering from a heart attack at CHC. He served as NMC's chief executive officer from 2004 to 2006. He was credited with many of the significant successes and accomplishments at NMC.

Dr. Inos died on Aug. 10 at CHC of cancer. She was 55. She was appointed to the CNMI Board of Regents in February 2006 and served as its chairperson from June 2006 to July last year.

Inos was the Public School System commissioner in 1998 to 2005. During NMC's most difficult and challenging times, board members reportedly look to her for her reassuring leadership and wise judgment.

On Oct. 1, Palacios, 66, passed away in Honolulu from lingering illnesses. He was a member of the 8th, 9th, 11th, and 13th Legislatures. He was chairman of the House Subcommittee on Labor and Immigration, and a former labor and immigration chief.

Fitial said Palacios served during a critical time with the Legislature and struggled with serious policy issues, including important amendments to CNMI tax laws that set the stage for the growth and developments of the islands.

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2010
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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

At the turning

Since Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendars to standardize the setting of Easter, the calendar of his namesake has become the internationally accepted method of time reckoning, with *Anno Domini* to start, now replaced with CE for the "Common Era."

Images of time are human inventions, and up to this point, they are adjustments to observed patterns in nature such as the rotation of the sun for a day, or the 28-day cycle of the moon for the lunar month.

There is nothing magical about the New Year save as we choose to give it character. The Year of the Tiger in the lunar calendar commences in 44 days, and that is equally without significance save as we ascribe something to it. Often, we invest mythical traits to phases to provide typologies for egos and personalities previously taken seriously, even in determining affairs of the State, or scaring our wits at apocalyptic movies, but has since become no more than just interesting items in the horoscope page of news dailies.

The newness that comes at this turning from 2009 to 2010 CE is entirely in our hands, or metaphorically, in how we deal with the hand that has been dealt us. Not unlike the dreaded Y2K disaster projected at the millennial turning, the specter of "federalization" brought fear in our expectations. It now turns out to be user-friendlier than we thought!

Gov. Ben Fitial and Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos of our current CNMI leadership campaigned on the strength of experience and though it had been noted elsewhere that their selection was not exactly met with jubilation in the streets, we have their guidance at the Capital helm for the next five years, with our being in the deeps rather than just wading in the shallows. With a new ethos of transparency in the civic mind, awakened citizenry can be active in participatory democracy, if it so chooses. With House Speaker Froilan Tenorio joining the troika of experience, there is no reason not to have a lively dialectics between the old guards and the newstarts.

It is on the proponents of change that the onus of initiative and responsibility lies. For change is inevitable but the pace can be of our own choosing. Evolutionary change is snail paced and often tedious; revolutionary change is rapid but tumultuous.

Elections are selections of personnel. It is time to focus on the clarity of policies, the comprehensiveness of programs and the transparency of projects. At this turning, we can decide to set our sight on the task, perhaps, even work together, again.

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Ought Lang Syne

By MARC COOPER
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Marc Cooper is director of Annenberg Digital News at the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism.

A turn of the calendar page and the ringing in of a new year is usually meaningless to me; my least favorite holiday. This year I'm making an exception. The decade of the "oughts" has been for naught, the most depressing in my lifetime, and it won't be over soon enough for me. I'm ready to celebrate almost anything but what we've had since 2000.

It has been a decade of collapse and exhaustion. It began with the breakdown of an antiquated balloting system and the charade of a moth-eaten electoral college and an unelected Supreme Court choosing the president. Less than a year after that, the myth of American invincibility was pierced with a few box cutters.

As the Twin Towers fell, so did our guiding principles as a nation. We not only struck back—inadequately—at the perpetrators (landing us in a briar patch we're still in nine years later), but we were also stampeded neck deep into a second unnecessary war by an administration that cynically manipulated our deepest but unfounded fears.

No sacrifice was called for by our leaders; worse, with tax cuts for the wealthiest and the least binding of market regulations shredded, Wall Street partied as if there would be no next decade, leaving us with a staggering tab for their excesses. Executive power was expanded with a zeal that would make Dick Nixon blush and Tom Jefferson roll over in his grave. Our global moral authority was drowned in the CIA's waterboard torture pits and in the horror dungeons of Abu Ghraib.

After New Orleans was nearly washed away in the summer of 2005, the fiasco was complete. Our treasury was bankrupt, our international image tarnished. Faith in our governing institutions was eroded and respect for the Constitution made a mockery.

Indeed, Hurricane Katrina marked the turning of the tide of an entire period of American history, the conservative hegemony that washed in with the Reagan revolution and definitively ebbed out to sea as the surge receded in the Big Easy. Just as President Reagan cut the last hanging threads of the New Deal, Katrina marooned the conservative majority on a desert isle of history. Isolated and bewildered by their sudden cruel exile, the best the Reaganites could do was put forward the privileged and befuddled son of a Navy admiral claiming to be an Everyman—who, in turn, chose a half-baked Alaskan pol unable to name a newspaper she regularly reads as his second.

If there were any doubts that the anti-government, free-market orthodoxy of the last three decades had come to a dead end, they were erased by the economic free fall that distinguished the closing days of the Bush era. That supposed, steadying, benevolent and invisible hand of the marketplace slapped one out of about seven American workers out of a job, shuttered more than 125 banks, threw one out of four American children onto food stamps, wiped billions of retirement funds off the table and did its best not only to rock our collective boat but to downright sink it.

The great economic earthquake of 2008 was, in some sense, a tumultuous, involuntary spasm of an entity already in its afterlife. Starting with the congressional elections of 2006, the American people were openly clamoring for an ousting of the exhausted. Two years later, in the midst of the financial meltdown, millions more resolutely voiced their dissent by electing a young, vibrant and relatively inexperienced African American as president based on his two-word platform of "change" and "hope."

Some thought a new day was upon us. But Barack Obama's first year in office has been sobering to those who naively believed that changing the world required only a few minutes in a voting booth. Part product of and part challenger to an ossified and obsolete system, Obama has struggled to lift the curtain on the new. We can all ponder the wouldas and shouldas when it comes to his strategy—and that of the Democratic majority in Congress—but that is all idle Beltway chatter compared to the larger question we face. A choice that just happens, by pure serendipity, to coincide with the coming of a new year and a fresh decade.

The old world is dead. But the new one still struggles to be born. The decisions we face in the coming decade are infinitely more awesome than what—if anything—the "public option" will or will not be, or how deep or not Obama should have bowed, or even who will dominate the House in 2010.

More important, do we have the collective will as a nation to imagine a completely new chapter in our history without resorting to a knee-jerk nostalgic yearning for the yesteryear of either the New Deal or "Morning in America"? Can we, together, begin to move beyond hubris and denial and into the realm of healing our profound ills? Or are we destined this next decade to continue languishing in a sort of political and moral purgatory that rejects the old but refuses to conjure the new? New Year's Day seems the right moment to decide.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Credit: Note gone (yet)

Sometimes even a complaint can hold a silver lining. Over the past few weeks a couple of my pals have griped about the proliferation of credit card offers in their mail. Their complaint is that this stuff is just more junk to wade through, and shred, when checking the mail.

But I see good news in this, especially for Saipan's entrepreneurs and professionals: It means that despite the total mutilation of the U.S. credit system over the past year, credit is still being provided to folks, or at least a lot of folks.

From what I've seen credit cards are often the only ready source of institutional capital available to small businesses (meaning their owners, who are typically personally responsible for the credit card debt). Every small business owner I've known over the years has used credit cards extensively.

Before digging into that, I'll note that there is a lot of flux in the credit card industry right now, owing to some big time changes in federal law that will take effect in February. Turning our gaze from the near future to the near past, I'll also note that there have been some real changes also in credit lines and interest rates that are sometimes fodder for news stories. Well, I can't change the world, nor can I change credit markets, I just do the best I can to deal with reality as I encounter it.

Furthermore, I'm looking at the optimistic side of reality today; that's the whole point of this column. It's my warm fuzzy for the New Year.

Let me count a few ways that credit cards are useful for the entrepreneur:

1. Expense tracking

Keeping a shoe box stuffed with receipts is a tough row to hoe, especially if you are disorganized and don't always have your shoe box with you. By contrast, credit card statements can be pulled up on your computer at will, making year-end accounting a whole lot easier.

2. Travel

A business trip can easily cost a few thousand dollars, and, furthermore, anyone traveling internationally (as many in Saipan do) is well-advised to have at least several thousand in contingency funds in case something goes wrong and you need doctors, lawyers, or maybe an emergency call to the Psychic Hotline. So, you can carry $10,000 in cash I guess, or you can carry plastic. The choice on this note is pretty clear for me, and I do a lot of traveling.

It's not just that credit cards are a transactions substitute for cash, it's that they are often times more useful than cash. I guess you could reserve a hotel room, or get a rental car, without a credit card, maybe, but most of us wouldn't have time to mess with that even if we could.

3. Buying stuff

Most of us buy a lot of stuff over the Internet. Credit cards make it easy.

4. Avoiding rip-offs

If you purchase something for cash, you don't have much recourse if the goods were misrepresented or defective. If you use a credit card, you can dispute the charge. I think I've only had to dispute two charges in my entire life, but, both times, my credit card company did a good job of investigating the event and I was treated very fairly.

By ED STEPHENS
Special to the *Saipan Tribune*

Ed is a pilot, economist, and writer. He holds a degree in economics from UCLA and is a former U.S. naval officer. His column runs every Friday. Visit Ed at TropicalEd.com and SaipanBlog.com.

5. As a short term cash buffer

If you run a small business, you know that sometimes expenses can hit when you are caught financially flat-footed. A credit card often times gives you a little breathing room so you can shift things around. For example, my on-line brokerage account can take an entire week to get cash to me when I need it, so it's a big benefit to have a credit card available when an unexpected expense hits. The cost of buying $3,000 of goods and services on credit for a month is probably about $28 (interest cost; I'm being approximate) for the typical cases that I'm aware of. That's a total bargain in my book. Of course, if you don't get it in gear and pay the balance off then interest will accumulate, but that's not the context I'm addressing here; I'm talking about smoothing out the bumps in the financial road, not digging a financial hole.

And here is the best possible theme to consider for the New Year: This is going to be a brutally competitive year, so you need every possible advantage you can get. Without credit, you're sunk. This is the first, not the last, look we'll give it this year.

Article XII: A brief summary of its history and provisions

By HOWARD P. WILLENS and DEANNE C. SIEMER
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Editor's Note: This article was submitted for publication by the Committee to Change Article XII, with permission from the authors. Due to its length, it is being published here as a four-part series.

Third of a four-part series

The second objective of the Convention was to develop a definition of sufficient flexibility so that the Northern Marianas people would have an opportunity to vote after termination of the trusteeship whether to continue the restrictions before any of their children might be barred from owning land. The delegates recognized that the intermarriage of Carolinians and Chamorros with persons of different ethnic backgrounds was likely to increase in the year ahead.

The problem was: no one knew in 1976 when the Trusteeship would be terminated. The United States negotiators declared that the United States would not terminate the Trusteeship with respect to the Northern Mariana until the status negotiations with the other district of Micronesia were completed. They estimated that termination might occur by 1981, but they made no guarantees.

In the light of those uncertainties, the Convention delegates settled on a definition that they thought would raise no serious problems for three generation—allocating about 20 years for each new generation. They began this analysis by reflecting on a person who was 100 percent NMD in 1950. There would be no question, of course, that this person could own land. If such a person married a person who did not qualify as NMD, their children, the second generation in 1970, would be 50 percent NMD and therefore still entitled to own land. If one of these children married a person not of NMD, then their children, the third generation in 1990, would be 25 percent NMD and therefore still entitled to own land. But if one of these children married a person not of NMD, their children, the fourth generation in 2010, would be only 1/8 NMD and therefore not entitled to own land.

The Convention anticipated that the requirements of section 805 would have ended by the time and that the people would be able to decide how best to deal with this situation in light of their economic needs and their social and cultural desires. As events unfolded, however, the trusteeship was not terminated until 1986.

The third objective of the Convention delegates was to be fair to spouses and adopted children. They decided that the restrictions of Article XII should not apply when a wife inherits land from her husband or a husband inherits land from his wife. For example, if a husband who is 100 percent NMD has a wife who is 0 percent NMD, she can still inherit land from him after his death. This rule was changed by the 1985 Constitutional Convention by an amendment later approved by the people to provide that a wife so situated could get the land only if the husband has no children who were eligible to own land.

So as far as adopted children were concerned, the Convention decided that an adopted child, if adopted under the age of 18, would have the same status regarding Northern Marianas descent as adopting parent. For example, if one parent is 25 percent NMD and the other parent is 0 percent, the first parent could adopt a child who is 0 percent NMD and as a result the child would be considered a 25 percent NMD. A proposal by the 1995 Constitutional Convention to change this rule was rejected by the voters.

The draft constitution prepared by the Constitutional Convention went before the people in March 1977 for approval or rejection. There were many critics of Article XII in the political campaign before the vote. They made a wide range of significant arguments directed at the provisions restricting land alienation set forth in Article XII.

- They argued that some Chamorros and Carolinians not born or domiciled in the Northern Marianas by 1950 would be excluded by the definition of Northern Marianas descent even if they wish to come back to live in the Northern Marianas.
- They argued that the restrictions would reduce the number of buyers for the land and exclude foreign buyers in particular with both the resources and motivation to invest in the Northern Marianas. Without competing buyers, Northern Marianas sellers would not be able to get the best possible price for their land.
- It was argued that such restrictions unduly interfered with an in individual's right to sell his own land to anyone he chose.
- The United States insistence on such restriction was regarded by some as treating the Northern Marianas people with the same paternalism that Native Americans were subject to in the United States.
- They contended that economic development would be slowed by these restrictions. Without the right to own land, foreign investors would be reluctant to invest large sums of money necessary to develop the tourism industry on which the future Commonwealth might have to depend.
- They argued that Article XII would result in lengthy and expensive litigation. Potential investors would be looking for ways to circumvent the restrictions of Article XII and local owners of land might be hurt as the result.
- The U.S. Congress might object to Article XII as it had with respect to a similar effort for Guam in 1950. Ultimately they were concerned that the United States courts might overturn these restrictions as unconstitutional.

To be continued on Monday.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you, CNMI!

Happy New Year to all my family and friends in the CNMI! I am a soldier from Saipan currently stationed in Vilseck, Germany. I got a package today, DEC. 30, 2009, from Operation CNMI Homefront Support and was surprised with its contents. It was filled with simple things that the people of the CNMI put together for soldiers currently deployed or are on active duty. My wife, daughter and I really appreciate it and would like to thank everyone involved for your kindness. Special thanks to the following:

- Gov. Benigno and first lady Josie Fitial, Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos and Cabinet members
- American Red Cross
- MCV, Mark Birmingham
- Rotary Club of Saipan
- Geri Willis
- Bank of Saipan, Jon Bargfrede
- Students of San Vicente Elem. School
- Knitting Club
- Beautify CNMI, Angelo Villagomez
- Saipan Tribune and Marianas Variety
- Beach Road Magazine
- Mr. Horiguchi
- Joeten Hafa Adai Bakery
- Herman's Modern Bakery
- SDA Dental Clinic
- Friday Morning Stampers at Coffee Care
- IT
- Joeten Affiliates/Price Costco/Triple J Super Fresh Market
- Tinian Fleming's Store
- Army Reserve Center
- Dannuell Rangamar from Rota Jr. High School (thank you for the Christmas card)

Last but not least, a big thank you to my father and mother in law, Antonio and Lourdes Deleon Guerrero. Dankolo na si yu'us ma'ase!! Hooah!

Glenn, Karen and KG Sablan
Vilseck, Germany

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°

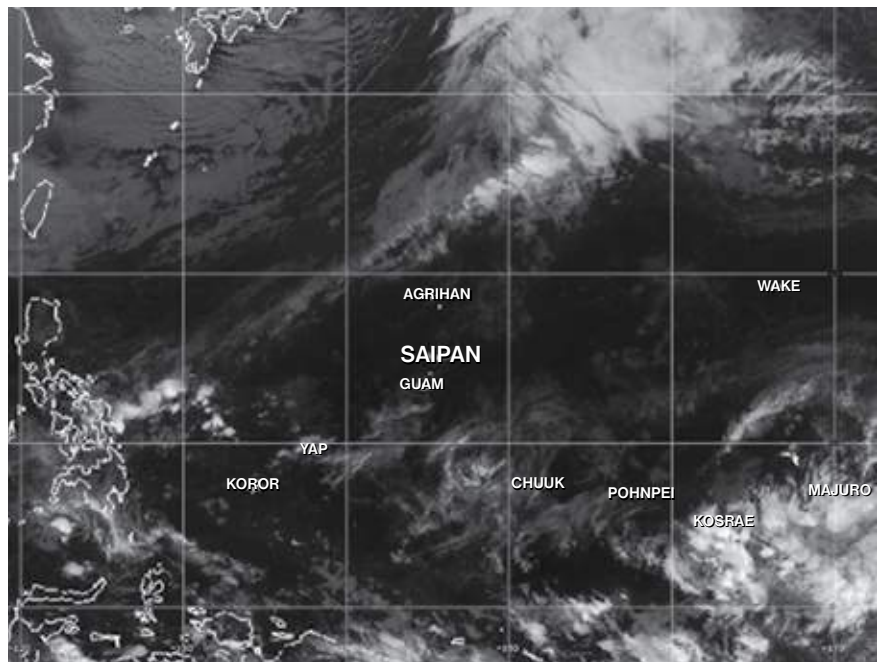
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Sunny	▲84	▼74
Palau	Showers	▲89	▼77
Yap	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼77
Chuuk	Mostly Cloudy	▲90	▼77
Pohnpei	Showers	▲86	▼79
Kosrae	Sunny	▲89	▼76
Majuro	Rain	▲83	▼79

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲74	▼64
Beijing	Sunny	▲32	▼21
Hong Kong	Showers	▲66	▼61
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲79	▼67
London	Mostly Sunny	▲36	▼28
Los Angeles	Partly Sunny	▲70	▼50
Manila	Showers	▲80	▼74
Melbourne	Thunderstorms	▲80	▼64
Miami	Thunderstorms	▲80	▼54
New York	Mostly Cloudy	▲40	▼30
Osaka	Flurries	▲41	▼31
Paris	Cloudy	▲36	▼29
Pusan	Sunny	▲37	▼27
Rome	Rain	▲50	▼38
Salem	Rain	▲47	▼42
San Francisco	Rain	▲57	▼46
Seoul	Sunny	▲23	▼22
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲44	▼29
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	▲42	▼26

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends east-northeastward from 20N130E to beyond 25N at 142E. Scattered showers are found over iwo to along and up to 175 miles northwest of a line from 22N137E to 25N142E. A surface trough extends southward from 10N130E to 3N132E. Scattered showers are found northwest of Koror between 13N and 10N from 130E to 134E. A surface trough extends southward over the Marshall Islands from Majuro to EQ173E. Converging winds near the trough are generating scattered showers and a few thunderstorms over Ebon Atoll in the Marshall Islands as well as Butaritari and Tarawa Atolls between 6N and the equator from 167E to the date line.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

1:46 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
8:58 AM	Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet
2:11 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.3 Feet
7:02 PM	Today	High Tide:	2.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Sunday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Monday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Tuesday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	6:29 PM	6:52 AM
Saturday	7:35 PM	7:49 AM
Sunday	8:38 PM	8:41 AM
Monday	9:38 PM	9:28 AM
Tuesday	10:35 PM	10:12 AM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am	
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm	
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1 via GUM	1, 3, 5, 6, 7
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

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- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

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- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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NMI gets a marine monument

By JOVAN I. FRED
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REPORTER TRAINEE

TOP 2009 STORIES

On Jan. 6, 2009, then U.S. President George W. Bush designated three new areas in the Pacific as marine national monuments—including the three northernmost islands of the CNMI and the Marianas Trench—in what has become the largest marine conservation effort in history.

The new marine monument encompasses 95,000 square miles of oceans surrounding the islands of Uracas, Maug and Asuncion, 21 hydrothermal volcanic vents and the entire stretch of the Marianas Trench.

Conservationists were not alone in their support for the designation of these marine monuments. Former Western States Bush Campaign chair Mario Rodriguez was among several prominent GOP supporters (including former U.S. Treasurer Rosario Marin) who petitioned the President for the strongest protections for the monument encompassing these unique geologic and biological resources.

The Friends of the Monument was the main proponent for a marine monument in the Marianas. When local elected leaders were not receptive to the idea of a marine monument, the Friends started a petition drive and collected over 6,000 signatures from local residents. The group also gained endorsements from the business community and prominent community leaders.

They are the recipients of the 2009 EPA Environmental Award, which recognizes individuals and groups who are making significant contributions to improve the environment.

Rep. Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) has already introduced legislation that authorizes a Marianas Trench Marine National Monument Visitors Center in the Northern Mariana Islands. The bill instructs the Secretary of the Interior to locate the facility in the NMI to inform the public about the Monument and provide a base for research. The goal is to have a Visitors Center where science, education, and culture come together to protect and conserve natural resources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Expired goods common form of fraud: NMC students

A report completed by students of the Northern Marianas College under Sam McPhetres' Current Issues class have identified various types of consumer fraud existing in the CNMI, the most predominant of which is the sale of expired food items.

The researchers inspected 15 various business establishments on island and came across expired products that were still on display in some stores in As Lito, Kannat Tabla, and Chalan Kanoa—all photographed by researchers for their study.

In their video presentation, researchers showed at least eight outdated items they found displayed and were being sold in stores. ***(Moneth Deposa)***

USCIS combines appointments for Rota and Tinian applicants

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services advises applicants for immigration benefits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands who live on Rota or Tinian that appointments for biometrics and interviews have been combined into one. USCIS did this to minimize the expense people face in traveling to Saipan twice for separate biometrics appointment and interview.

If an applicant in Rota or Tinian who is awaiting interview receives a notice of a biometrics appointment notice, they can ignore that notice and have their fingerprints and photograph taken the day of their interview.

For more information about immigration benefits or to check the status of your application, visit www.uscis.gov or www.uscis.gov/cnmi; contact USCIS Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283; or make an appointment at www.uscis.gov to visit the USCIS office at TSL Plaza on Saipan. ***(PR)***

Live-fire, laser training on FDM

SANTA RITA, Guam—The U.S. Air Force will conduct live-fire and laser training exercises on the island of Farallon de Medinilla on Jan. 4, from noon to midnight, and Jan. 5-7, from 8am to 5pm.

The general location of this activity will be on the island of Farallon de Medinilla Training Area on a 10 nautical mile radius on all quadrants. The public, especially fisherman, commercial pilots and marine tour operators, are advised to stay clear from this area during the times and dates indicated.

Farallon de Medinilla plays a special and unique role in national defense because its location provides access frequency that supports established training requirements. In addition, the air and sea space in the Farallon provides sufficient room for the many different attack profiles necessary to replicate training opportunities in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. ***(PR)***

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Saipan-da plays Santa to visiting children

Children arriving in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are welcomed by Saipan-da and given Saipan-da backpacks, courtesy of the Marianas Visitors Authority. Over 600 children received the annual holiday welcome at the Francisco Ada International Airport, and it made them smile.

MVA

In the spirit of the holidays, a life-size Saipan-da played Santa Claus to children arriving in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The panda-inspired mascot greeted children at the Francisco C. Ada International Airport on 26 flights arriving over the two-day period. Over 600 children ages 11 and under also received a special Saipan-da backpack, courtesy of Saipan-da and his workshop at the Marianas Visitors Authority.

"One of our most delightful annual activities is to give a gift to children arriving at Christmas time," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "This treasured tradition puts a smile on both their faces—and ours—and helps make their visit to Saipan, Tinian and Rota even more memorable."

Saipan-da is a popular figure among both children and adults in Japan and has helped build name recognition for the Saipan-Tinian-Rota destination. ***(MVA)***

Martial arts team films video featuring Saipan

MVA

Children arriving in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are welcomed by Saipan-da and given Saipan-da backpacks, courtesy of the Marianas Visitors Authority. Over 600 children received the annual holiday welcome at the Francisco Ada International Airport, and it made them smile.

This month the Marianas Visitors Authority hosted members of Canadian martial arts Team 2X, on Saipan to film a short movie about this extreme martial arts performing team.

The filming was sponsored by J Sports, a Japanese cable and satellite channel that specializes in broadcasting sports games and sport-related news. The visit to the Northern Mariana Islands was one in a series of short movies featuring major tourist destinations. NMI sports events, as well as the highlighted visitor destinations, will be publicized as part of the movie.

J Sports has four channels that reach over five million households. This video highlighting Saipan will be shown once as a 30-minute movie and over 1,000 times as a 60-second clip. Additionally, a five-minute Saipan infomercial will be shown five times. All together, the estimated ad value of this exposure is over $800,000.

Team 2X visited famous Saipan locations, including Pau-Pau Beach, Banzai Cliff, the Last Command Post, Suicide Cliff, Marpi Passway, Bird Island, Sugar King Park, Micro Beach, Beach Road Walkway, the airport bunkers, and the Grotto. The group also spent a day filming on beautiful Managaha Island. These scenic and historic sites will provide background to the martial arts performed by these talented athletes.

As an added bonus for Saipan residents and tourists, the group put on a five-minute performance at the Garapan Street Market.

MVA arranged the itinerary for Team 2X performers and accompanying director and cameraman. Complimentary accommodations were provided by Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

"We are delighted the NMI was chosen as a setting for Team 2X to film this movie. Their targeted audience are people aged 30-50, the same age group that will visit Saipan to enjoy our sports opportunities and family activities," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "This type of exposure helps potential tourists learn about our beautiful islands and all there is to do here."

Airing of the various Saipan-related clips will take place in December 2009 and January 2010. ***(MVA)***

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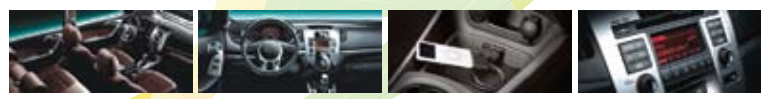

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AG: No legal duty to respond to transition panel requests

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Attorney General Edward T. Buckingham said Executive Branch departments and autonomous agencies have no legal duty to respond to requests for information or documents or request for meeting attendance from the transition committees of the Tinian mayor-elect or the Rota mayor-elect.

"However, subject to other existing legal requirements related to confidential and/or otherwise non-public information and documents, no legal prohibition exists for cooperation and information exchange authorized by the incumbent Executive Branch departments and autonomous agencies based on custom or practice or the sound exercise of discretion," the attorney general said.

This was the gist of Buckingham's three-page legal opinion dated Dec. 17.

He said it is "inappropriate" to create a legal duty for the Executive Branch departments and autonomous agencies to respond to requests for information, documents or meeting attendance deriving from the transition committee of the respective mayor-elect based on non-existing legislative language.

Buckingham said to reach a different position, one must conclude that a mayor-elect transition committee has legal standing even though it does not exist in statute.

"While this may or may not represent sound public policy, such legal duty should not be created out of whole cloth. Should the Legislature deem such activity necessary, the Legislature has the capacity to enact appropriate legislation," he said.

Tinian mayor-elect Ramon M. Dela Cruz and Rota mayor-elect Melchor Mendiola have formed their respective transition committees.

The attorney general said assuming that no legal duty exists, there exists the related question about the capacity of the incumbent Executive Branch departments and autonomous agencies to respond to requests for information, documents or meeting attendance deriving from the transition committees of the respective mayor-elect.

"Such response, if any, rests within the sound exercise of discretion of the respective incumbent Executive Branch departments and autonomous agencies," Buckingham said.

Certain information contemplated for release includes "confidential" information.

The attorney general, in a footnote to AG Opinion 2009-3, said the transmission of confidential information to a designated mayor-elect transition committee appears inappropriate until and unless appropriate agreements and safeguards are established so that such information may be disclosed.

"It is not the intent of this Opinion to address the means by which such arrangements might be undertaken. However, caution is urged so that inadvertent disclosure of confidential information does not create unintended harm," the attorney general said.

ACE HARDWARE DONATION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ace Hardware (CNMI) Inc. donates $500 to Marianas High School. Picture shows Alvin Adriano, left, Ace Hardware Gualo Rai store manager, presenting the check to Karen Borja, MHS principal. At right is Lois Manese, Ace Hardware office manager.

OAG seeking information on the sale of illegal cigarettes

As part of the Office of the Attorney General's continuing efforts to enforce Commonwealth laws, it is seeking information from any person who has knowledge of the illegal sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Tobacco is regulated in the Commonwealth and employees from the Department of Commerce, the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Health, and the Office of the Attorney General, including the Attorney General's Investigation Unit, are constantly seeking information concerning illegal tobacco-related actions.

Such actions include, but are not limited to illegally importing tobacco products, selling tobacco products without proper licensure, selling cigarettes and other tobacco products to minors, selling tobacco products in improper packaging, selling tobacco products without providing a receipt to the consumer, and failing to pay proper taxes on tobacco products sold.

Any person who has any knowledge of any of the above activities is encouraged to report such information to the Attorney General's Investigative Unit at 664-2312 or the Alcohol Beverage & Tobacco Control Division of the Department of Commerce at 664-3065 or 664-3014. ***(OAG)***

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Department of the Navy (DoN) and the Joint Guam Program Office (JGPO) will host public hearings on the islands of Guam, Tinian, and Saipan to receive oral and written comments on the Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) military relocation Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS). The Draft EIS/OEIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with relocating Marines from Okinawa, Japan to Guam, constructing visiting Aircraft Carrier berthing facilities, and establishing a U.S. Army Air and Missile Defense Task Force on Guam. The Draft EIS/OEIS also examines off base mission critical, mission support, and community support infrastructure improvements needed to ensure that Joint Region Marianas can provide expanded direct support of the DoD strategic mission and operational readiness in the Western Pacific Region. The public hearings will be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

The public is encouraged to attend the public hearings, which will be held at the following dates, times, and locations:

Thursday January 7, 2010- Southern High School, Santa Rita, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House)
7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Saturday January 9, 2010- Field House, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm
(Open House) 3:00 pm-5:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Monday January 11, 2010- Yigo Gymnasium, Yigo, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House)
7:00 pm-9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Tuesday January 12, 2010- Okkodo High School, Dededo, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House)
7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Thursday January 14, 2010- Tinian Elementary School, San Jose, Tinian 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House)
7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Friday January 15, 2010- Multi Purpose Center, Susupe, Saipan 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House)
7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

An open house will take place during the first two hours of each hearing, followed by a two-hour formal public hearing. Informational posters will be displayed and subject matter experts will be available during the open house to discuss the findings of the Draft EIS/OEIS and to answer questions from the public. The formal portion of the hearing will include a presentation followed by a request for comments on the Draft EIS/OEIS. Chamorro translators will be available at all hearings, and Carolinian translators will be available at the Tinian and Saipan hearings.

Oral and/or written comments may be submitted at the public hearings. Oral comments will be limited to three minutes. After three minutes, speakers will be allowed to continue off-stage with a typist. Interested agencies, individuals, and groups unable to attend the public hearings are encouraged to provide written comments postmarked no later than February 17, 2010.

Mail comments to: JGPO c/o NAVFAC Pacific
258 Makalapa Drive, Suite 100
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii 96860-3134
Attention: GPMO

A web-based comment form can also be submitted at www.guambuildupeis.us.

The Draft EIS/OEIS is available for review at www.guambuildupeis.us and at the following libraries: University of Guam Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Library, Government Documents Tan Siu Lin Building, UOG Station, Mangilao, GU 96923; Nieves M. Flores Memorial Library, 254 Martyr Street, Hagåtña, GU 96910; Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, P.O. Box 501092, Saipan, MP 96950; Northern Marianas College Olympio T. Borja Memorial Library, P.O. Box 501250, Saipan, MP 96950; and the Tinian Public Library, P.O. Box 520704, Tinian, MP 96952. In addition, a reading room with copies of the Draft EIS/OEIS for the public to review has been established at Agana Shopping Center. This facility will be open during normal shopping center hours starting from November 21, 2009 to February 17, 2010 so that members of the public can access and review the Draft EIS/OEIS.

Federal agencies, government of Guam agencies, government of CNMI agencies, the public, and other interested parties are encouraged to provide oral and/or written comments for consideration in the Final EIS/OEIS. JGPO will consider all comments received as they develop the Final EIS/OEIS.

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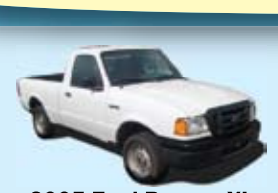
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Business

AP
In this May 22, 2006 file photo, Specialist Garet Boehning works at his post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

String of INVESTMENT BUBBLES marked 2000-09

NEW YORK (AP)—A string of exploding investment bubbles that started with the dot-coms and ended with mortgages and oil dominated the years from 2000 to 2009. And it looks like the next decade will be no different.

It doesn't seem to matter to many hedge fund traders and other professional investors that the Standard & Poor's 500 index has turned in its first losing performance over the course of a decade, having fallen 23 percent from 1,469.25 at the start of 2000 to its current 1,126.20. Or that they or other investors helped create and then destroy the bubbles that left stocks worth $2.5 trillion less today than when the decade began—and that's before adding in the effects of inflation.

A mix of investor hubris, ignorance and piles of easy money created the bubbles. New ideas about where to invest seemed foolproof and greed crowded out doubts. Many investors looking for the best returns failed to see the potential problems with an Internet business that had no sales plan, or that thousands of expensive homes bought with no down payment might end up in foreclosure.

Now, these investors who fled the last blowups risk running smack into others. The Federal Reserve is keeping borrowing costs low to help revive the economy, and that means there's still plenty of easy money around, helping traders to inflate the price of everything from stocks to commodities such as gold.

"They've put out the biggest punch bowl in U.S. history and people are guzzling from it," said Haag Sherman, chief investment officer at Salient Partners in Houston.

It begs several questions: What will be the next bubble? Or is it already here? And, how do individual investors protect their savings?

Some analysts have already been asking if the stock market formed a bubble with its huge rebound this year. The S&P 500 is up 68.9 percent from the 12-year trading low of 666.79, its best performance since the 1930s.

Gold is also suspect. It's above $1,098 an ounce and up 24 percent in 2009. Other possible sources of bubbles include stocks in emerging markets such as China, where the Shanghai index is up 76.4 percent this year.

Analysts say it's in the DNA of markets to let ambition cloud good judgment and that even when investors learn or relearn a lesson about excess, many still forget it.

Moreover, investors still have $3.2 trillion in money market mutual funds that's waiting to be invested, according to iMoneyNet Inc. With so much cash available and investors hankering after big returns, analysts warn that bubbles may be inevitable.

The signs of effervescence can be hard to spot.

"Pets.com was going to have a market cap larger than Exxon Mobil," said David Darst, chief investment strategist for Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in New York, referring to the Web site that collapsed in November 2000, nine months after raising $82.5 million from investors.

He says investors will keep getting tripped up as they find new ways to invest.

"Human nature doesn't change," Darst said. "Market mechanisms change but human fear, human greed will be like this decades and centuries hence."

The numbers from this decade tell a stunning story:

■ The Nasdaq composite index, powered by the dot-com buying that began in the late 1990s, went all the way up to 5,048.62 in March 2000, then crashed down to 1,114.11 at the depths of the 2002 bear market. It rose as high as 2,859.12 in October 2007, but no one expects it to return to its loftiest levels.

And the indexes don't reflect inflation, taxes and fees, which take the value of an investment down further. Thornburg Investment Management, which analyzed the value of investments beyond the decade, said $100 invested in 1978 would have been worth only $376 thirty years later after accounting for inflation, expenses and taxes.

■ Crude oil, sparked by a weaker dollar and worries that oil producers would soon be unable to meet global demand, rose 71 percent in just six months to a high of $147.27 in July 2008. Prices then crashed down to $33.87 in just five months. The plunge was so precipitous that it destroyed several hedge funds that had bet oil would just keep soaring.

■ Low borrowing rates and insatiable demand for mortgage debt by investors made it easy to get loans. That helped prop up housing prices and fuel speculation on securities based on those risky mortgages. The peak came in April 2006; after that, home prices fell 31.9 percent to a low in May 2009, according to the S&P/Case-Shiller 20-city index. Along the way, two investment banks that bought mortgage-backed securities collapsed and the government spent hundreds of billions of dollars to prop up many commercial banks.

■ Prices for soybeans and corn hit record levels in the summer of 2008 as floods swept the Midwest and damaged key growing regions. In the first six months of the year, corn shot up more than 60 percent and soybeans rose more than 30 percent. The jump in prices was a boon to many traders, but led to food riots in Africa, Asia and the West Indies. By December of last year, both grains had lost half their value.

Analysts say the best way to avoid being caught by other bubbles is to remain vigilant about diversifying, the practice of investing in a variety of assets. It could also mean shedding some of the stronger performers to avoid some of the risks that the winners will falter.

"When something grows too big in the portfolio you have to force yourself to scale it back a little bit," Darst said. "There's no substitute for doing your homework, there's no substitute for asking questions."

By spreading their holdings around and saving more, investors can buffer against what many analysts worry will be the fallout from the low interest rates and easy money that are being used to help revive the economy.

Policymakers also have concerns. Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke said last month a policy favoring cheap borrowing risked setting more traps for investors. He said he didn't see any signs that a bubble is emerging but also acknowledged that it is "extraordinarily difficult" to detect one forming.

Some analysts see bubbles right now.

Quincy Krosby, market strategist for Prudential Financial is skeptical of gold's recent surge.

It's easy to see why gold could be in a bubble. Many investors who have bought gold are speculating that inflation will start rising because of all of the money coursing through the financial system. One of gold's greatest appeals is as a hedge against inflation.

"It will move up, but the music always stops," Krosby said of gold.

Simon Laing, a director at Newton Investment Management Ltd. in London, notes that investors are using money borrowed at low rates in the U.S. and Europe to buy stocks in other markets—raising the prospect of new bubbles.

This comes as causes of past bubbles still present obstacles.

"I don't think we've taken the medicine yet," he said. "We've had a decade of bubbles and I still think we're in the same scenario."

Krosby said individuals shouldn't be fooled into thinking that regulators have been able to curtail risk-taking in the past two years since the collapse of the market for securities based on iffy mortgages.

"They're playing in a world where professional traders dominate even though we think we've gone through this tremendous regulatory revolution," she said.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

13 state AGs threaten suit over health care deal

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—Republican attorneys general in 13 states say congressional leaders must remove Nebraska's political deal from the federal health care reform bill or face legal action, according to a letter provided to The Associated Press Wednesday. "We believe this provision is constitutionally flawed," South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster and the 12 other attorneys general wrote in the letter to be sent Wednesday night to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. "As chief legal officers of our states we are contemplating a legal challenge to this provision and we ask you to take action to render this challenge unnecessary by striking that provision," they wrote. The letter was signed by top prosecutors in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington state. All are Republicans, and McMaster and the attorneys general of Florida, Michigan and Pennsylvania are running for governor in their respective states.

Van causes scare a day before Times Square revelry

NEW YORK (AP)—A white van without license plates parked in the heart of Times Square caused a security scare Wednesday that rattled New Yorkers and thousands of holiday tourists milling about amid preparations for the city's massive New Year's Eve celebration. Just weeks after a police-involved shooting in the area, the NYPD blocked off part of Times Square for about two hours starting at 11 a.m., calling in counterterrorism and bomb squads after officers noticed the 1992 Dodge van, which had a bogus law enforcement placard in the windshield, parked on Broadway between 41st and 42nd streets. Two high-rise buildings, home to Nasdaq and publishing company Conde Nast, were partially evacuated, but occupants were allowed back in around 1 p.m.

Medicare officials plan for health stimulus funds

WASHINGTON (AP)—Medicare officials on Wednesday detailed plans to distribute billions of dollars in stimulus to upgrade the nation's paper medical records to electronic files. Under the proposal, doctors and hospitals that keep updated electronic medical records of their patients could receive bonus payments for using the software. Officials for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services stressed to reporters on a conference call that the proposal is preliminary and won't be finalized until next spring. The proposal was posted to the agency's Web site. Using electronic records could reduce costly medical errors and duplicative testing, according to Obama administration officials.

Aetna expects up to $65 million charge in 4Q

NEW YORK (AP)—Health insurer Aetna Inc. said Wednesday it expects a fourth-quarter charge of up to $65 million to cover costs for a previously announced series of layoffs and office consolidations. In November, the company announced plans to cut 625 jobs, or nearly 2 percent of its staff. It also said it would make a similar number of cuts by the end of 2010. Aetna, based in Hartford, Conn., expects to employ about 34,300 employees when the layoffs are complete in the first quarter of 2010.

Nation

Economy, Obama inauguration: Top stories of 2009

BY DAVID CRARY
AP NATIONAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The convoluted American economy—restoring windfalls to a lucky few while leaving millions jobless and distraught—was the top news story of 2009, followed closely by the inauguration of President Barack Obama, according to U.S. editors and news directors voting in The Associated Press' annual poll.

The economy, which has superseded other issues as Americans' No. 1 concern, received 61 first-place votes out of 117 ballots cast for the top 10 stories. A related saga, the tribulations of the U.S. auto industry, was voted the No. 4 story.

In 2008, the top story was Obama's election as the first African-American president. His inauguration this year was No. 2, receiving 45 first-place votes, while the bruising battle in Congress over a health care overhaul was No. 3.

For the first time, the AP also enabled members of the general public to select their list of top stories, setting up a separate vote on Facebook. Those voters, 1,410 in all, reversed the order of the editors' and news directors' top two stories—placing Obama's inauguration first and the economy second, but the two Top 10 lists had eight stories in common.

AP

This Nov. 4, 2008 file photo shows President Barack Obama looking out into the crowd after his acceptance speech at Grant Park in Chicago. This first decade of the 21st century has taken us from hanging chad to fist bumps and beyond. From peace and prosperity to war and economic turmoil. In two improbable elections that serve as bookends to the decade, Americans elected, barely, a pedigreed president following in his father's footsteps and then, surprisingly easily, a trailblazer who symbolically closed the nation's long festering wounds over race relations.

One notable difference was that Michael Jackson's death was No. 3 among Facebook voters, instead of seventh on the AP members' list.

Here are 2009's top 10 stories as voted by the U.S. editors and news directors:

1. THE ECONOMY

Despite a $787 billion federal stimulus package, much of the U.S. economy continued to sputter throughout the year. The jobless rate topped 10 percent, scores of banks failed, the federal deficit tripled to a record $1.4 trillion, and stocks fell to their lowest levels since 1997 before rallying. Yet investment banks' profits surged, triggering public anger and efforts in Washington to crack down on Wall Street bonuses.

2. OBAMA INAUGURATION

Inauguration Day in January was a moving moment for many Americans, as the nation's first black president took the oath of office. But Obama soon confronted the sobering realities of governing as he struggled to get the economy back on track and win support for his ambitious legislative priorities.

3. HEALTH CARE

A sweeping overhaul of the U.S. health care system, extending coverage to millions of Americans now without it, was a top priority for Obama and majority Democrats in Congress. But Republicans were almost unanimously opposed, leading to complex, bitterly partisan showdowns in both chambers.

4. AUTO INDUSTRY

It was an immensely challenging year for America's Big Three automakers. General Motors and Chrysler filed for bankruptcy, GM's CEO Rick Wagoner was ousted by the government, and Chrysler was pressured into an alliance with Italy's Fiat. Ford avoided bankruptcy, but its worldwide sales—like its competitors'—fell sharply.

5. SWINE FLU

Swine flu struck tens of millions of people worldwide, worrying governments as supplies of vaccine failed to meet demand. In the United States, according to federal authorities, swine flu sickened an estimated 50 million people, hospitalized close to 200,000 and killed 10,000.

6. AFGHANISTAN

Casualties on all sides mounted as U.S. forces, with their Afghan and NATO allies, battled the resilient Taliban. President Obama, after lengthy deliberations, opted to send 30,000 more troops. His decision was complicated by the disputed Afghan election, which prompted allegations of widespread fraud but resulted in Presi-

See ECONOMY on Page 18

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
PA/HMGP/CIP PROGRAM – OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel.: (670) 664-2375 • Fax: (670) 664-2408

INVITATION TO BID
ITB10-GOV-036

Susupe Multi-purpose Center Renovations

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, are soliciting sealed bids for the Susupe Multi-purpose Center Renovations, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands:

The project package will be available Monday, December 21, 2009 at the Governor's CIP Administrator's Office, Juan A Sablan Building, Capitol Hill. A $25.00 non-refundable fee for the project package will be assessed. All interested bidders are required to include an Insurer Certification Clearance (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC should be obtained at the Department of Commerce, Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, as revised through May 24, 2001. Public Law 15-95 Local Preference Act, as amended by Public Law 15-118 does not apply to this Federally funded project. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

There will be a Pre-bid Conference/Site Visit for this project on Monday, December 28, 2009, 9:00 a.m., Saipan local time, at the project site, Multi-purpose Center, Susupe. All questions regarding this project must be submitted by email or in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on December 29, 2009 to Mr. Chris Fryling, Project Manager, Capital Improvements Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at chris@n15architects.com, or faxed to (670) 664-2408.

Sealed bids must be marked "ITB10-GOV-036". For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than 10:00 a.m. Saipan local time, January 19, 2010. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement & Supply no later than 10:00 a.m. Saipan local time January 19, 2010, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than January 19, 2010 and must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. January 25, 2010. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at 4:00 p.m. Saipan local time, January 25, 2010. However, if no notices of intent to bid are received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will opened at 11:00 a.m. Saipan local time, on January 19, 2010.

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($25,000.00) a bid bond of fifteen percent (15 %) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. This security may be a Certified Check, Cashier's Check or Bid Bond. Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". Surety companies must hold a certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the CNMI Attorney General.

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations Section 3-301. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price. The surety company providing the Performance and Payment bonds must be authorized to conduct business in the CNMI and possess unencumbered assets equal to the penal amount of each bond. Performance time for completion of this project is one forty-five (45) calendar days upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. The daily amount of liquidated damages shall be greater of (i) two hundred fifty dollars ($250.00), or (ii) two percent (2%) of the contract price divided by forty-five (45) calendar days, the contract time and will be assessed as delays beyond the established completion date.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not effect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

/s/ BENIGNO R. FITIAL, Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

/s/ Herman S. Sablan, Director
Procurement and Supply, DOF

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INVITATION TO BID
ITB10-GOV-041

Garapan Drainage Clean-Up, Orchid Street

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, are soliciting sealed bids for the Garapan Drainage Clean-Up, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands:

The project package will be available Tuesday, January 05, 2010 at the Governor's CIP Administrator's Office, Juan A Sablan Building, Capitol Hill. A $25.00 non-refundable fee for the project package will be assessed. All interested bidders are required to include an Insurer Certification Clearance (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC should be obtained at the Department of Commerce, Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, as revised through May 24, 2001. Public Law 15-95 Local Preference Act, as amended by Public Law 15-118 does not apply to this Federally funded project. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

There will be a Pre-bid Conference/Site Visit for this project on Wednesday, January 13, 2010, 9:00 a.m., Saipan local time, at the project site, Orchid Street, Garapan next to Winchell's. All questions regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on January 13, 2009 to Mr. Carl Castro, Project Coordinator, Capital Improvements Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, or faxed to (670) 664-2408.

Sealed bids must be marked **"ITB10-GOV-041"**. Bidders must submit an original and two copies of sealed bids to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than 10:00 a.m. Saipan local time, January 19, 2010. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid. Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at 11:00 a.m. Saipan local time, January 19, 2010.

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($25,000.00) a bid bond of fifteen percent (15 %) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. This security may be a Certified Check, Cashier's Check or Bid Bond. Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". Surety companies must hold a certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the CNMI Attorney General.

AP-GfK Poll: 2009 was bad for America, Americans

WASHINGTON (AP)—For all their differences, Americans largely agree on two things: 2009 was a lousy year for the nation, and 2010 is likely to be better. Nearly three-fourths of Americans think 2009 was a bad year for the country, which was rocked by job losses, home foreclosures and economic sickness. Forty-two percent rated it "very bad," according to the latest AP-GfK poll.

That's clearly worse than in 2006, the last time a similar poll was taken. The survey that year found that 58 percent of Americans felt the nation had suffered a bad year, and 39 percent considered it a good year.

Fewer than half as many people, 16 percent, said their family had a "very good year" in 2009 as said that in 2006.

Behind the gloominess, however, are more hopeful views that seem to reflect Americans' traditional optimism or, perhaps, wishful thinking.

Even though most said it was a bad year for the country, three in five Americans said their own family had a good year in 2009, while about two in five called it a bad year.

Some 72 percent of Americans said they're optimistic about what 2010 will bring for the country. Even more, four in five, are optimistic about what the year will bring for their families.

AP

In this Feb. 23, 2009 file photo, a home is seen in San Antonio, facing imminent foreclosure without assistance.

Curiously, however, nearly two-thirds think their family finances will worsen or stay about the same next year.

Mari Flanigan of South Milwaukee, Wis., is one of those who feel fairly optimistic that things will go better at a personal level in 2010 even though her financial situation might grow worse.

Flanigan, 36, is unemployed after selling a family business that faced increasing competition. "Financially, I'm scared," she said in an interview.

Rather than seek new work, however, she is thinking of returning to school to become a social worker. "I'd rather make less money and do something I love," Flanigan said, noting that happiness and optimism are not strictly tied to finances.

Every corner of the country saw steep job losses this year, and the national unemployment rate stands at 10 percent. Millions of Americans saw their savings or retirement accounts shrink, and many are rethinking how long they will have to work, and where they might find income.

Marcia Andrews of Blairsville, Pa., was a high school nurse until budget cuts eliminated her job.

Andrews, 69, spent $250,000 to convert an old house into a bed-and-breakfast, but the drop in tourism forced her to put it up for sale.

"It was the wrong place and the wrong time," said Andrews, one of those surveyed in mid December. On top of that, she lost money in the stock market.

Despite signs that the nation is edging away from the worst aspects of a severe recession, people remain largely downbeat about the economy. Fewer than half think the economy will get better in 2010, while slightly more than half think it will worsen or stay about the same.

Just over a third think their own family's finances will get better, while almost two-thirds think their finances will stay the same or get worse.

James Lewis, who just retired in Alton, Ill., called 2009 a "financial disaster" for America, and he fears 2010 won't be much better.

Lewis, 62, said of the past year: "Everything done wrong. Everybody losing their 401(k). Some people losing their house, their retirement."

He is pessimistic about 2010, pointing blame at financial institutions and government officials.

"They've made a mess and they're going to have a hard time cleaning it up," said Lewis, who calls himself a political independent. Government regulators, he said, "dropped the ball."

Lewis said 2009 wasn't too bad for him personally, but some members of his family "can't find a job that pays enough to live." He said he doesn't have much hope -"maybe a little"- that they will find work in 2010.

Americans are not optimistic about the nation's two wars. Thirty-one percent think the situation in Afghanistan will get better, while 67 percent think it stay the same or get worse. The results were about the same for Iraq.

Given that President Barack Obama took office in 2009 and Democrats enjoyed solid majorities in Congress, perhaps it's not surprising that Democrats have a sunnier view of the current and coming years than do Republicans.

Only 10 percent of Republicans said 2009 was a good year, compared to about one-third of Democrats and independents. A whopping 87 percent of Democrats are optimistic about what 2010 will bring for the country, compared with 53 percent of Republicans and 73 percent of independents.

People's views of their personal circumstances divide along partisan lines, too.

Only one in five Republicans think their family's finances will improve in 2010. Nearly half of Democrats and 40 percent of independents hold that view.

Steve Bishop, 59, of Middletown, Calif., said he's pleased the government is trying to overhaul the nation's health care system.

Mistakes of the decade: What were they thinking?

By **CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Every decade has its mistakes, of course, but one nice thing about the past 10 years' foibles, foul-ups and flubs is that so often they came with neat monikers, almost like keepsakes: "Wardrobe malfunction." "If I did it." "Balloon boy."

Here's a review of four what-were-they-thinking moments.

1. Aerial ambitiousness also gave us the balloon boy. When a homemade foil-covered balloon supposedly slipped its tether with a 6-year-old inside, we all held our breath—except some heavy-breathing cable anchors. The balloon finally landed—empty—and the kid was found safe at home, hiding, his father said. But why? "You had said that we did this for a show," the tyke told Dad, a would-be reality TV star, live on CNN. Whoops. Hoax charges followed.

2. Publishing mistake of the decade, coming in 2006: "If I Did It," former football star O.J. Simpson's book about how the murders of which he was acquitted might have been carried out. Amid furious protest, the project was aborted, the book was ordered "pulped," and the publisher acknowledged its "ill-considered project." And that wasn't the biggest faux pas of the decade for OJ. No. 1 was going to that Nevada hotel with weapon-toting friends to "reclaim" his sports memorabilia. "It was," said the sentencing judge, "much more than stupidity."

3. "So, we were watching the boob tube Sunday..." So began an editorial in the Lebanon (Pennsylvania) Daily News, commenting on the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show during which singer Justin Timberlake tore away part of Janet Jackson's costume, momentarily exposing her breast in what was later called a "wardrobe malfunction." Knowing the offense given to millions of live viewers (plus those offended again and again as they cued up the YouTube rerun), Federal Communications Commission smut-busters imposed a fine—but that, too, turned out to be a mistake. Arbitrary and capricious, a federal appeals court ruled.

4. Finally, it must be acknowledged there were a few mistakes in the entertainment world—and we're not just talking about auditions for the hit the TV show "American Idol." No, at least those didn't cost $100 million, the amount investors plowed into the 2002 movie "The Adventures of Pluto Nash." Basically, nobody showed up at the box office. Well, not quite nobody. "I know two or three people that liked this movie," said the star, Eddie Murphy. Who knew there'd be no audience for a comedy about a nightclub arson on the moon?

Colo. mom, baby revived after Christmas Eve birth

DENVER (AP)—A Colorado woman says a Christmas miracle brought her and her newborn son back from the brink of death after her heart stopped beating during childbirth and the baby was delivered showing no signs of life.

"I got a second chance in life," Tracy Hermanstorfer said.

Hermanstorfer, 33, was being prepped for childbirth at Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs Thursday morning. Her 37-year-old husband was by her side when she began to feel sleepy and lay back in her bed.

"She literally stopped breathing and her heart stopped," her husband, Mike, told The Associated Press. Pandemonium erupted as doctors and nurses tried to revive her with chest compressions and a breathing tube, but nothing worked.

"I was holding her hand when we realized she was gone," Mike Hermanstorfer said. "My entire life just rolled out."

Doctors told him, "We're going to take your son out now. We have been unable to revive her and we're going to take your son out," he recalled.

After the Cesarean section, some of the team rushed his wife to the operating room while the others attended to Coltyn. They handed him to Mike Hermanstorfer, who said the baby was "absolutely lifeless."

"My legs went out from underneath me," Hermanstorfer said. "I had everything in the world taken from me, and in an hour and a half I had everything given to me."

The doctors went to work on Coltyn as Hermanstorfer held him, and soon he began to breath.

"His life began in my hands," Hermanstorfer said. "That's a feeling like none other. Life actually began in the palm of my hands."

Stephanie Martin, a maternal fetal medicine specialist at the hospital, said Tracy Hermanstorfer's pulse returned even before she was wheeled out of the room and into surgery. She estimates Hermanstorfer had no heartbeat for about four minutes.

"She had no signs of life. No heartbeat, no blood pressure, she wasn't breathing," said Martin, who had rushed to Hermanstorfer's room to help. "The baby was, it was basically limp, with a very slow heart rate."

After their stunning recovery, both mother and the baby, named Coltyn, appear healthy with no signs of problems, Martin said.

She said she cannot explain the mother's cardiac arrest or the recovery.

"We did a thorough evaluation and can't find anything that explains why this happened," she said.

Mike Hermanstorfer credits "the hand of God."

ECONOMY

From Page 17

dent Hamid Karzai taking office for a second five-year term.

7. MICHAEL JACKSON DIES
The "King of Pop" died at the age of 50, triggering grief and nostalgia among his legions of fans around the world. His doctor became the focus of a Los Angeles police homicide investigation after telling investigators he administered propofol, a powerful operating room anesthetic, to help the pop star sleep.

8. FORT HOOD RAMPAGE
An Army psychiatrist, Maj. Nidal Hasan, was accused of killing 13 people at Fort Hood, a sprawling military base in Texas, before being seriously wounded by police gun fire. Investigations were launched to determine if authorities missed warning signs that might have prevented the rampage.

9. EDWARD KENNEDY DIES
Sen. Edward Kennedy, who carried on the family legacy after the deaths of his three older brothers, died of brain cancer after a distinctive political career filled with highs and lows. Though his own presidential aspirations were thwarted, he earned bipartisan respect for decades of hard work in the Senate.

10. MIRACLE ON HUDSON
A US Airways passenger jet, both its engines disabled, made an emergency ditching in the Hudson River, and all 155 on board survived in what was dubbed "The Miracle on the Hudson." The veteran pilot, Chesley Sullenberger, was hailed as a hero for averting a disaster.

Just missing the Top 10 was the confirmation of Sonia Sotomayor as the first Hispanic justice on the Supreme Court.

The war and political turmoil in Iraq was voted the No. 16 story, the first time since 2001 that Iraq was not in the Top 10.

The results of Facebook voting closely resembled the AP members' choices; each Top 10 list had only two stories not on the other list. Sotomayor's confirmation and Iran — the tensions related to its election and nuclear program — were in the Facebook Top 10 but not the members' Top 10. The Fort Hood rampage and Afghanistan did not make the Facebook Top 10.

In both cases, several write-in votes were cast for a development that occurred too late to be included on the ballot — the scandal enveloping golfer Tiger Woods after he crashed his car outside his home early one morning and eventually confessed to marital infidelity.

Here are the Facebook voting results:

1. Obama's inauguration.
2. The U.S. economy.
3. Michael Jackson dies.
4. Miracle on the Hudson.
5. Swine flu.
6. Health care overhaul.
7. Edward Kennedy dies.
8. Auto industry woes.
9. Iran.
10. Sotomayor joins Supreme Court.

The Facebook voting, conducted on a non-scientific basis, was for entertainment purposes only and shouldn't be considered an accurate reflection of public opinion.

Asia

HUSTISYA, KARAPATANG PANTAO!
HINDI MARTIAL LAW!
Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya (KPD)
VICTIMS of SOCIAL INJUSTICE -KPD
VICTIMS MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE -KPD
VICTIMS of WAR & EXTRA JUDICIAL KILLINGS -KPD

AP

Activists lie beside mock coffins during a rally calling for an end to martial law in southern Maguindanao province as they commemorate International Human Rights Day at the historic Mendiola bridge near the Malacanang Presidential Palace in Manila, Philippines, Thursday Dec. 10, 2009.

Wars and elections main threats to journalists

NEW YORK (AP)—Watchdog groups say 2009 was one of the most dangerous years for journalists, especially those covering wars and elections, including the largest massacre of media workers ever killed in one day.

Reporters Without Borders said 76 journalists were killed in 2009—30 of them in a single incident, covering an election on the Philippine's Mindanao Island.

According to another watchdog group, the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists, a total of 137 journalists and media personnel were killed in 2009, making one of the worst on record for the deliberate killing of reporters and media staff.

Reporters Without Borders counts only journalists and bloggers, while the Brussels-based group also counts other media staff like interpreters and drivers.

"It's becoming more risky mainly because journalists are being seen as targets. Before there was an unspoken immunity. Now, the freedom to be an independent observer doesn't exist anymore," said Sam Trudeau, Reporters Without Borders New York representative.

Trudeau said covering elections has also gotten more dangerous as information coming out of a country over the Internet and through other channels can lead to increased international pressure over contested elections just hours after polls close.

Taliban claim blast that killed 8 Americans

KABUL (AP)—The Taliban claimed responsibility Thursday for a suicide bombing at a base in eastern Afghanistan that killed eight American civilians and one Afghan, the worst loss of life for the U.S. in the country since October. A U.S. congressional official said CIA employees are believed to be among the victims.

Four Canadian soldiers and a journalist also were killed Wednesday by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan's south, the bloodiest single incident suffered by that country's military this year.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told The Associated Press that a Taliban bomber wearing a military uniform and a suicide vest entered the base in Khost province Wednesday evening and blew himself up inside the gym. A U.S. official who was briefed on the blast also said it took place in the gym.

That official said eight U.S. civilians and one Afghan were killed; it was not clear if the Afghan victim was military or civilian. Six Americans were wounded, the official said.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Indonesians bury popular former President Wahid

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Thousands of mourners thronged roads Thursday in Indonesia to say farewell to late President Abdurrahman Wahid, a beloved, one-eyed cleric who reached out to religious minorities in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. Wahid, who ruled for nearly two years of tumult as Indonesia embarked on a path to democracy in 1999 after three decades of dictatorship, died in a hospital Wednesday. He was 69. A memorial service was led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono before the burial in Wahid's East Java hometown of Jombang, where about 10,000 supporters prayed over his remains, which were wrapped in white sheets.

North Korea bans use of foreign currency

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea has banned the use of foreign currency, another sign its hard-line communist government is intent on reasserting control over the country's nascent market economy. Reports say the decree warns of severe punishment for anyone using U.S. dollars, euros, yuan and other non-North Korean currencies. Foreign currencies previously were accepted in some shops, restaurants and other outlets, particularly those catering to foreigners. The order, issued by North Korea's state security bureau and going into effect Jan. 1, aims to "forbid the circulation of foreign currency," China's state-run CCTV television said in a brief report late Wednesday.

China says mentally ill murdered in extortion bids

BEIJING (AP)—Police have arrested nine people in southwest China suspected of trafficking mentally ill people to be murdered in mines across the country in a bid to blackmail mine owners into paying compensation, a local official said Thursday. Mine owners in China face intense pressure to keep deadly accidents under wraps, and have reportedly been found paying off journalists and relatives of dead miners in recent years to keep safety problems from coming to light. The nine were arrested recently in Leibo county in Sichuan province in connection with suspected murders in nine other provinces, said an official who identified himself as the deputy director of the Leibo government's propaganda department. Like many Chinese officials, he gave only his surname, Jiang.

World

Yemeni forces raid al-Qaida hideout, CLASHES ERUPT

SAN'A, Yemen (AP)—Yemeni forces raided an al-Qaida hideout and set off a gunbattle Wednesday as the government vowed to eliminate the group that claimed it was behind the Christmas bombing attempt on a U.S. airliner.

The fighting took place in an al-Qaida stronghold in western Yemen, haven for a group that attacked the U.S. Embassy here in 2008, killing 10 Yemeni guards and four civilians. A government statement said at least one suspected militant was arrested during the clashes.

"The (Interior) Ministry will continue tracking down al-Qaida terrorists and will continue its strikes against the group until it is totally eliminated," Deputy Interior Minister Brig. Gen. Saleh al-Zawari told senior military officials at a meeting in Mareb, another province believed to shelter al-Qaida fighters.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, an offshoot of Osama bin Laden's group, claimed it was behind the attempt to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner. Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old passenger, was arrested Friday after he allegedly tried to bring down the Northwest Airlines flight, carrying 289 people.

U.S. investigators said Abdulmutallab told them he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen. Yemen's government has said Abdulmutallab spent two periods in the country, from 2004-2005 and from August to December of this year, just before the attempted attack.

Abdulmutallab's Yemen connection has drawn attention to al-Qaida's growing presence in the impoverished and lawless country, which is located on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia.

Wednesday's clashes took place in Hudaydah province, an al-Qaida stronghold along the Red Sea coast. A security official said the target was a house owned by an al-Qaida sympathizer. The official said the owner was arrested, a suspected al-Qaida member was injured and several militants who fled were being pursued. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Somali arrested at airport with chemicals, syringe

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP)—U.S. officials are investigating a Somali man's alleged attempt to board a flight last month carrying chemicals, liquid and a syringe in a case bearing chilling echoes of the plot to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day.

Terrorism analysts said the arrest in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, could prove highly valuable for the Detroit investigation if the incidents turn out to be linked.

The Somali was arrested by African Union peacekeeping troops Nov. 13 before boarding the Daallo Airlines plane bound for the northern Somali city of Hargeisa, then Djibouti and Dubai.

"We don't know whether he's linked with al-Qaida or other foreign organizations, but his actions were the acts of a terrorist. We caught him red-handed," said a Somali police spokesman, Abdulahi Hassan Barise.

A Nairobi-based diplomat said the incident has similarities to the attempted attack on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 in that the Somali was said to have a syringe, liquid and powdered chemicals—tools similar to those used by the Nigerian suspect on the Detroit-bound plane. The diplomat spoke on condition he not be identified because he wasn't authorized to release the information.

Russia may send spacecraft to knock away asteroid

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia's space agency chief said Wednesday a spacecraft may be dispatched to knock a large asteroid off course and reduce the chances of earth impact, even though U.S. scientists say such a scenario is unlikely.

Anatoly Perminov told Golos Rossii radio the space agency would hold a meeting soon to assess a mission to Apophis. He said his agency might eventually invite NASA, the European Space Agency, the Chinese space agency and others to join the project.

When the 270-meter (885-foot) asteroid was first discovered in 2004, astronomers estimated its chances of smashing into Earth in its first flyby, in 2029, at 1-in-37.

Further studies have ruled out the possibility of an impact in 2029, when the asteroid is expected to come no closer than 18,300 miles (29,450 kilometers) from Earth's surface, but they indicated a small possibility of a hit on subsequent encounters.

NASA had put the chances that Apophis could hit Earth in 2036 as 1-in-45,000. In October, after researchers recalculated the asteroid's path, the agency changed its estimate to 1-in-250,000.

NASA said another close encounter in 2068 will involve a 1-in-330,000 chance of impact.

WORLD BRIEFS

Briton held for over 2 years in Iraq freed

BAGHDAD (AP)—A British contractor was freed Wednesday and in good health more than two years after he was abducted, apparently the only survivor of a group of five Britons abducted in a daring raid outside Iraq's Finance Ministry in 2007. His release came as a bombing in the country's western Anbar province killed 23 people and narrowly missed the province's governor. The high-profile attack in what used to be a stronghold of the insurgency was a sign of the tenuousness of the security in Iraq. Computer consultant Peter Moore, who was handed over to Iraqi authorities Wednesday morning, was abducted in May 2007 along with his four British bodyguards. All the bodyguards are believed dead.

New French government decree: Party 'til dawn

PARIS (AP)—Just in time for New Year's Eve, a new decree from France: Let them dance 'til dawn. Despite France's reputation for bon vivants sipping Champagne until the wee hours, aficionados have been complaining that nightlife, especially in Paris, is in decline. An Internet petition warns that the City of Light has become "Europe's capital of sleep"—and complains that musicians, DJs and partiers are heading instead to London, Barcelona, Prague and Berlin. In a bid to bring them back, government proclaimed last weekend that dance clubs across France can now stay open until 7 a.m., later than has been allowed in many parts of the country.

Iran hardliners call for killing rivals at rallies

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Tens of thousands of hardliners poured into the streets in support of Iran's clerical rulers at state-sponsored rallies Wednesday, some chanting calls for the execution of opposition leaders as the country's internal strife turned more bitter. Some wore white funeral shrouds to symbolize a willingness to die in defense of the ruling system. An ominous online threat in the name of a previously unknown group said suicide squads were ready to assassinate the opposition leaders should the judiciary fail to punish them within a week.

Off the Wall

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Calif. man, 81, scares off robbers by shooting

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Sacramento police said an elderly man scared off would-be robbers inside his home when he pulled a gun and started shooting. Sacramento police spokesman Sgt. Norm Leong said the two robbers were able to get inside the home of an 81-year-old man after asking to use his phone Saturday evening. Though one of the men was armed, the victim was able to pull out his own gun when he was left inside a room where he kept the gun. The two men fled when the elderly man started shooting through a door. Police said the man, who was believed to be by himself during the robbery, was not hurt.

Suit: NYC eatery patron hurt by falling moose head

NEW YORK (AP)—A Web designer says she was struck by the decor at a New York City restaurant—when it fell on her head. Raina Kumra says in a negligence lawsuit filed last week that a 150-pound stuffed moose head with 3-foot-wide antlers plummeted off a wall at the Scandinavian-themed White Slab Palace on Oct. 4 and hit her. She says she suffered a concussion and other injuries. The owner of the Manhattan restaurant hasn't returned a telephone message left by The Associated Press. Nor has Kumra, who's representing herself in the case. Kumra filed her lawsuit in state Supreme Court in Manhattan. She's seeking unspecified damages.

Funeral home offers drunk drivers a free burial

ROME, Ga. (AP)—Planning to drink and drive this New Year's? A north Georgia funeral home has a deal for you. Between now and noon Thursday, drivers can visit McGuire, Jennings and Miller Funeral Home in Rome to sign a contract stating they plan to drink or take drugs and then drive on New Year's Eve. If they die in a wreck that day, the funeral home will give them a free burial. Services included in the package are a casket, grave, limousine and preparation of remains. Funeral home officials said the program is designed to save lives by making partygoers think twice about drinking and driving.

Bad moves thwart Washington truck heist

RENTON, Wash. (AP)—Truck theft diary: ■ Take silver 1985 Chevy truck from City Transfer yard in Sumner, Wash., early Monday morning. Helpfully fill it with unleaded gasoline. Fail to notice it requires diesel. ■ Call 911 for assistance when truck stalls shortly after noon Monday on State Route 167 in Renton area. Grab green reflector vest found in truck so as to appear to be actual City Transfer employee when help arrives. ■ Have the misfortune to have a REAL City Transfer employee drive by and report location of stalled, stolen truck to police. ■ Watch Washington State Patrol troopers arrive. Watch a real City Transfer employee who witnessed the theft arrive and describe the man he saw take the truck.

Bologna, PBJ sandwiches turn jailhouse menu bland

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. (AP)—Taking a bite out of crime has never been so bland at a southeast Michigan jail. Failing freezers have forced Macomb County Jail inmates to forgo warm meals in favor of an endless stream of bologna and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Sheriff's officials said Wednesday that mold was spotted last month in the jail's 50-year-old freezers. But with no money for replacements, the sandwich diets may continue through early next year. The Detroit Free Press reports that county officials warned commissioners as early as 2005 that the freezers needed to be replaced. Officials next month plan to ask commissioners for emergency funds to buy new refrigerators.

Nebraska troops finds gift-wrapped pot in SUV

SCOTTSBLUFF, Neb. (AP)—A Nebraska trooper found an unexpected holiday present at the end of a police chase. The Nebraska State Patrol says the trooper found 7 pounds of gift-wrapped marijuana inside an SUV that ran off the road during a chase in Morrill County. The patrols says the trooper tried to stop the SUV for failure to signal on Tuesday. After a short pursuit, the SUV turned into a cornfield. The patrol says the driver fled on foot but was captured a short time later. A passenger, who was pregnant, remained in the SUV and was arrested. The patrol says the two face charges of possession of marijuana with intent to deliver. The driver may also face additional charges stemming from the chase.

W. Pa. man buys home at tax sale, finds it razed

CANONSBURG, Pa. (AP)—A southwestern Pennsylvania man received a Christmas Eve lesson in the old adage, "Let the buyer beware." Billy Joe Sanders, of Pittsburgh, said he bought a home in Canonsburg during a Washington County tax sale in August. When he went to check on the property on Christmas Eve, he learned that it had been torn down by the county's redevelopment authority—and has since learned his $5,500 won't be refunded. County officials said tax sales all include a "buyer beware" clause, and owners are responsible for doing a title search and otherwise checking on the property's status. Officials said buyers of homes slated for demolition are usually notified, but sometimes it doesn't happen. Sander said he plans to bill the county or sue to get his money back.

Man fights intruder after using 'beer can' alarm

FARGO, N.D. (AP)—Fargo police said an apartment tenant who set empty beer cans in front of his door to alert him to intruders ended up fighting with an alleged burglar. Sgt. Bill Ahlfeldt said police were called early Tuesday after a report of two elderly men attacking each other. Ahlfeldt says a 61-year-old man who lives in the same building was arrested on suspicion of burglary. Ahlfeldt said the man appeared to be intoxicated, and it's possible he believed he was entering his own apartment.

Fla. man wanting ride to bar calls 911, arrested

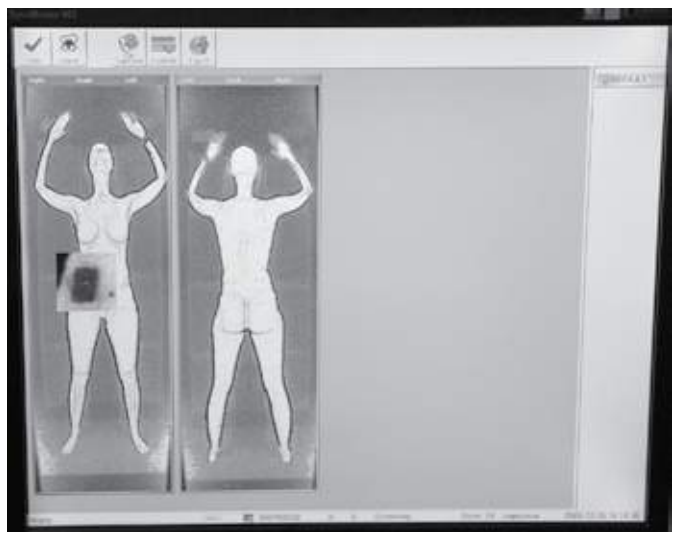
OLDSMAR, Fla. (AP)—Authorities say a Florida man who called 911 claiming he'd been beaten and shot at was hoping the tale would get him a ride to a bar. Instead, 37-year-old Gregory J. Oras is facing charges of misusing the 911 system and battery of a law enforcement officer. An arrest report says Oras called 911 three times before his arrest early Tuesday in Oldsmar, northwest of Tampa. He told the dispatcher he had a broken nose and bleeding ears, and claimed people were shooting at him. Authorities say he was actually looking for a ride to another bar. The report also says Oras kicked a Pinellas County sheriff's deputy in the knees and a Taser was used to subdue him. Online records show he is being held at the Pinellas County Jail but don't indicate whether he has an attorney.

Escaped otters delay Ohio-bound flight in Houston

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Passengers on a Continental Airlines flight couldn't believe it when they saw an otter scurry from the plane's cargo hold and onto the tarmac at Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport. The daring escape by a pair of otters delayed the Ohio-bound flight for about an hour Tuesday night. One passenger said that most on board thought the delay was a joke at first. But another said they watched one of the otters scurry across the tarmac. Airport workers managed to catch the otters and return them to their cages and the flight took off for Columbus.

Science & Technology

Q&A Full-body scanners



AP

A computer monitor displays a full-body scan during a demonstration of passenger screening technology by the Transportation Security Administration, Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2009, at the TSA Systems Integration Facility in Arlington, Va.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Travelers still getting used to removing their shoes in public and pouring shampoo into tiny bottles may soon have to adjust to something new in the airport security line—giant machines that that scan their bodies for anything a terrorist might use to cause harm during a flight.

High-tech, full-body scanning machines are already in use at a handful of airports, but they may become more common as security officials around the world respond to the attempted attack on an airliner on Christmas Day. The Netherlands announced Wednesday that the scanners would be used for all flights heading from Amsterdam's airport to the United States, and an official in Nigeria later said that country planned to buy full-body scanners too.

What exactly are these machines, and how do they work? What are the drawbacks to using these types of scans?

Here are some questions and answers about the devices.

Q: How do these full-body scanners work?

A: The two main types of scanners are "millimeter wave" and "backscatter" machines. Millimeter wave units send radio waves over a person and produce a three-dimensional image by measuring the energy reflected back. Backscatter machines use low-level X-rays to create a two-dimensional image of the body.

Q: What sorts of things can they find?

A: The machines are designed to uncover what a physical pat-down could turn up but a metal detector wouldn't find. That includes plastic or chemical explosives and nonmetallic weapons in a pocket or strapped to someone's body.

The machines would also find guns, knives and other metallic objects that would set off a metal detector.

Q: What can they not find?

A: Generally, the machines can't find items stashed in a body cavity. So the scanners wouldn't stop at least one common smuggling method used by drug traffickers.

Q: How common are they at airports?

A: Because of fears that the scans infringe on travelers' dignity by revealing bodily contours, European officials have generally limited the machines to tests in airports or train stations.

In U.S. airports, the Transportation Security Administration has begun expanding the use of full-body scanning machines, although passengers can opt for a physical pat-down instead. The TSA has 40 in place, just bought 150 and plans to buy 300 more.

Six of the machines are being used instead of a metal detector at airports in Albuquerque, N.M.; Las Vegas; Miami; San Francisco; Salt Lake City; and Tulsa, Okla. The other 34 are used for secondary screening of people who set off a metal detector in Atlanta; Dallas/Fort Worth; Denver; Detroit; Indianapolis; Jacksonville and Tampa, Fla.; Los Angeles; Phoenix; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Richmond, Va.; and two airports in the Washington area: Baltimore/Washington and Reagan National.

Q: Is there a way to make the scans less revealing?

A: The technology has evolved to reduce the clarity of identifying details. The systems blur faces, or they produce body images that look like chalk outlines.

Amsterdam's airport is moving ahead with full-body scanners after trying new software that projects a stylized image—rather than an actual picture—onto a computer screen. It highlights the area of the body where objects are concealed in pockets or under the clothing.

The TSA says it uses logistical methods to safeguard privacy. Full-body images are viewed in a walled-off location not visible to the public. The security officer assisting the passenger cannot view the image, and the officer who views the image doesn't see the passenger. If the officer viewing the image sees something of concern, he notifies the agent who is with the passenger to do further screening.

The machines can't store or print images, and the TSA says officers who view the images are not allowed to take cameras or cell phones into the screening rooms.

Q: How long does it take to be scanned?

A: The machines are getting faster but still can take up to 15 seconds to scan a traveler, which could make the process slower than using metal detectors.

TSA officials note that in some instances, these machines can be faster. For instance, people with medical devices that typically set off metal detectors wouldn't have to make multiple passes through the machine or be pulled aside for additional screening.

Q: Do security officials hope to use the full-body scanners on every person getting on a flight?

A: At the moment, that's probably not realistic—in the U.S. alone, there are 730 checkpoints with 2,100 security lanes at the nation's 450 airports, and there are thousands more lanes at airports around the world. Cost may be an issue—the machines can be $130,000 to $200,000 each.

Taking Amsterdam, where the machines are already in place, as an example: The airport's 15 scanners won't be enough to screen every U.S.-bound passenger, so pat-down searches will still be used. It remains to be seen whether that strategy will be copied at other airports.

Q: Do the scanners pose health risks, especially for frequent travelers?

A: The TSA says the technology is harmless.

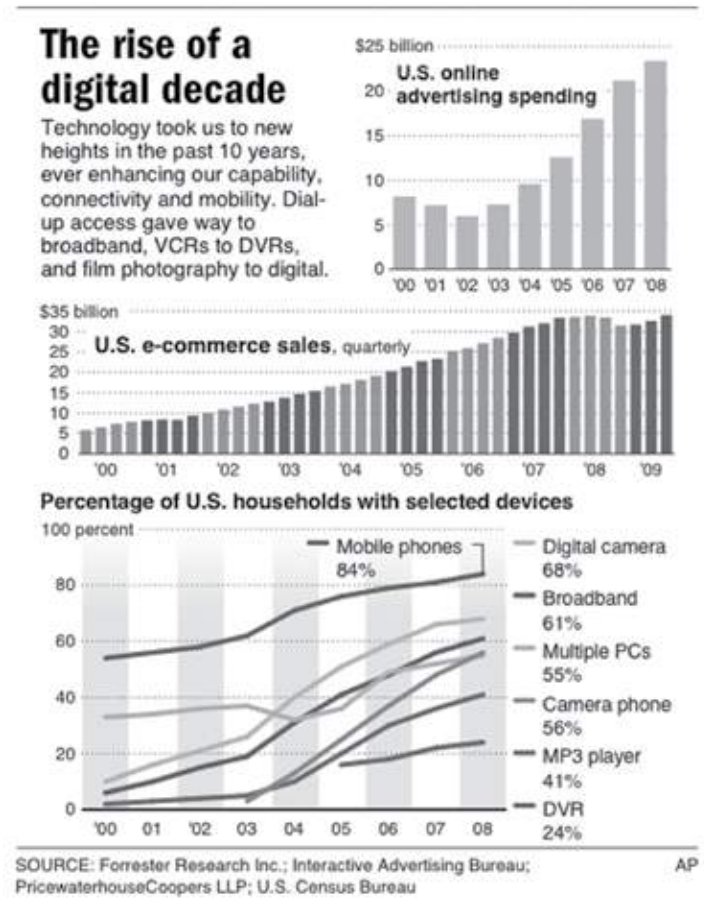
Millimeter wave energy is common in the world, and the TSA says the scanners produce far less energy than a cell phone. The X-rays in backscatter machines are weak; TSA says the radiation is equivalent to what a person gets in two minutes of flying on an airplane.

If someone fears the technology, the TSA offers a physical pat-down.

Life & Style

AP

In this product image provided by Research in Motion, the BlackBerry Tour is shown.


The rise of a digital decade
Technology took us to new heights in the past 10 years, ever enhancing our capability, connectivity and mobility. Dial-up access gave way to broadband, VCRs to DVRs, and film photography to digital.
$25 billion
U.S. online advertising spending
'00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08
$35 billion
U.S. e-commerce sales, quarterly
'00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09
Percentage of U.S. households with selected devices
100 percent
Mobile phones 84%
Digital camera 68%
Broadband 61%
Multiple PCs 55%
Camera phone 56%
MP3 player 41%
DVR 24%
'00 01 '02 03 04 05 06 07 08
SOURCE: Forrester Research Inc.; Interactive Advertising Bureau; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP; U.S. Census Bureau
AP

Graphic shows online advertising spending, quarterly e-commerce sales and percentage of households with selected electronic devices.

50 things that changed our lives in the aughts

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP NATIONAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Was it only a decade ago that a blackberry was a mere warm season fruit? That green was, well, a color, and reality TV was that one show sandwiched between music videos on MTV?

There were, of course, huge political and social upheavals that roiled the world in the past decade, but there also were the gradual lifestyle changes that people do not always notice when they are happening; kind of like watching a child grow older. Here is an alphabetical look at 50 things that changed our lives since the beginning of the millennium:

AIRPORTS: Remember when you did not have to take off your shoes before getting on a plane? Remember when you could bring a bottled drink on board? Political terror changed all that.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE: From acupuncture to herbal supplements to alternative ways of treating cancer, alternative medicine became more mainstream than ever.

APPS: There is an app for that! The phrase comes from Apple iPhone advertising, but could apply to the entire decade's gadget explosion, from laptops to GPS systems (want your car to give you directions to Mom's house in Chinese, or by a Frenchwoman named Virginie? There was an app for that.)

AARP (American Association for Retired People) cards ... for baby boomers! Some prominent Americans turned 50 this decade: the pop singers Madonna and Prince. Comic Ellen DeGeneres. The Smurfs. Michael Jackson, the King of Pop—who also died at 50. And some prominent "early boomers" turned 60: Rocker Bruce Springsteen and actress Meryl Streep, for example.

AGING: Nobody seemed to look their age anymore: Clothes for 50-year-old women started looking more like clothes for 18-year-olds, tweens looked more like teens, long hair was popular for all ages, and in many ways women's fashion seemed to morph into one single age group.

BLOG: I blog, you blog, he blogs ... How did we spend our time before blogging? There are more than 100 million of these Web logs out there in cyberspace.

BLACKBERRIES: Considered essential by corporate CEOs and moms planning playdates. Introduced in 2002, the smartphone version is now used by more than 28 million people, according to its maker, Research In Motion Ltd.

BOOK CLUBS: Thanks in part to TV personality and business mogul Oprah Winfrey, the decade saw not only a profusion in book discussion clubs but a growing reliance on them by publishers.

CABLE: Cable 24-hour news made the evening network news seem quaint, cable dramas reaped Emmys ... and at decade's end, even Oprah was making the move to cable.

CAMERAS: Remember those trips to get film developed? Nope? Even your grandmother has a digital camera, and she is probably e-mailing you photos right now or uploading them to a photo-sharing site.

CELEBRITY CULTURE: Celebrity magazines fed a growing obsession with celebrities and the everyday minutiae of their lives. By decade's end, Americans still were obsessed, though Britney Spears and Angelina Jolie had ceded many covers to reality stars like Jon and Kate Gosselin. Celebrity Web sites like TMZ took hold mid-decade.

AP

This Nov. 3, 2006 file photo shows the then new Apple iPod Shuffle, right, next to a Red iPod Nano, center, and 60GB iPod, left, at an Apple store in Palo Alto, Calif.

CELL PHONES: Cell phones are now used by more than 85 percent of the U.S. population and for some have replaced land lines. On the downside, they have made cheating on a spouse more difficult—just ask Tiger Woods.

CHEFS: Chefs are hot! The Food Network, whose viewership tripled this decade, reeled in viewers with high-voltage personalities like Rachael Ray and Bobby Flay, Emeril Lagasse and Giada De Laurentis. Meryl Streep starred in a cinematic pean to the late Julia Child.

CONNECTIVITY: As in, we are all expected to be connected, wirelessly, all the time. Boss e-mails you on a Sunday? Better answer, because unless you are off in Antarctica, you have no excuse.

COUGARS: A new TV series called "Cougar Town" focuses on a phenomenon that gained its name this decade: women dating younger men.

CROCS: Those ubiquitous plastic clogs debuted in 2002 and became the shoes you loved to hate. Kids love 'em, but there are Web groups dedicated to their destruction. Not to be deterred: First lady Michelle Obama, who wore them on vacation in 2009.

DANCING: Dancing never went out of style, but this decade saw the huge popularity of dancing contests like "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Dancing With the Stars."

DATING: Dating was transformed like everything else by Internet sites, rendering other ways of meeting people obsolete. And it was not just the territory of the relatively young: Seniors found love online, too.

DVRs: Suddenly, DVR-ing is a verb, and what it means is this: There's no reason to know anymore what channel your program is on, and what time.

EMBARRASSMENT ENTERTAINMENT: Embarrassment has always been part of comedy—you need only think of Don Rickles—but this is the decade of cringeworthy Larry David in "Curb Your Enthusiasm," Ricky Gervais, and of course Sacha Baron Cohen, who as Borat and Bruno shamed perhaps the entire country.

FACEBOOK: Can you believe this social networking site was once limited only to Harvard students? Now it is a time-sucking obsession for more than 300 million users globally and a whole new form of social etiquette: Whom to friend on Facebook?

FAT: This was the decade that fat became the enemy of the state. New York City banned trans fats, and Alabama—second in national obesity rankings—introduced a tax on overweight state workers.

FOODIE: It is not just that guy in the White House who liked arugula—this was the decade of the foodie, when we all developed gourmet palates. Even a burger became a gourmet item—as in Daniel Boulud's truffle burger, stuffed with foie gras and short ribs.

GOING GREEN: From the kind of light bulbs we use to the kind of shopping bags we carry to the cars we drive, "going green" took hold this decade. Now, it is not strange to hear a schoolchild tell a parent to use a cloth grocery bag.

GOOGLE: This was the decade that Google became a part of our brain function. You know that guy who was in that movie—when was it? Just Google it.

GPS: We cannot get lost anymore—or at least it is pretty difficult, with the ubiquitous GPS systems. But you had better type in your location carefully: One couple made a 400-mile mistake this year by typing "Carpi" rather than "Capri."

HELICOPTER PARENTING: Translation: helicopters hover, and so do many parents. After years of obsessive attention to safety and achievement of the youngest children, some said a backlash was under way.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD: An explosion in Internet use led to an overload of information about practically everything. It is at our fingertips, but is it accurate? Some call it part of a larger phenomenon, namely ...

INSTANT GRATIFICATION: Otherwise known as being able to get anything you want within an instant. Often referred to as a theme of the decade.

IPODS: An icon of the digital age, it is hard to believe this portable media player was launched in 2001. Six years later the 100 millionth iPod was sold.

LIFE COACHES: In the aughts, there was a coach for everything! So why not life itself? Some say life coaches are merely therapists without the license or regulations.

MUSICALS: They have been around forever, but this decade musicals came back to film, starting with "Moulin Rouge" and "Chicago." But for kids, it was Disney's extremely successful "High School Musical" franchise—three movies and counting—that brought back the musical magic.

NETFLIX: The DVD by mail service, established in 1997, announced its two-billionth DVD delivery this year. For many, those discs on top of the TV are just one more thing to procrastinate over.

ORGANIC: Americans rushed to fill their grocery carts with organic food, making it big business—now a $21 billion industry, up from $3.6 billion in 1997. At decade's end, Michelle Obama planted the first White House organic vegetable garden.

PREGNANCY CHIC: If you've got it, flaunt it: That was the new ethos of the pregnancy experience, with chic clothes that emphasized the bulging belly, personal pregnancy photos, and endless coverage of celebrity pregnancies.

REALITY TV: As a nation, we became addicted to reality TV, from the feuding Gosselins of "Jon & Kate Plus 8" to "American Idol" to "Project Runway." At decade's end, the Heenes of Balloon Boy fame and the Salahis of gate crashing fame give reality TV some unwanted attention.

RECESSION CHIC: Fashion skewed to more severe styles, and much black, as so-called "recession chic" took hold in the latter part of the decade.

RETRO CHIC: Once you forget the smoking, the racism, the sexism and the homophobia, the early 1960s depicted by the AMC series "Mad Men" sure looked good. The swinging Madison Avenue ad men make neckties cool again.

SEXTING: Combine texting with a cell phone's camera function and you get this parental nightmare. A survey from Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project found that 15 percent of teens ages 12-17 with a cell phone had received sexually suggestive images or videos.

STARBUCKS: It is a cliche that there is one on every block, but sometimes it seemed like it, and millions now consider it normal to spend $4 or so on a coffee drink in the morning, perhaps a venti half-caf half-decaf vanilla latte with an extra shot.

TATTOOS: It started innocently enough—maybe a butterfly on the shoulder or a tribal symbol on the bicep. A few characters from the Chinese alphabet later, it seemed any hipster who really meant it had a full sleeve of tattoos. The trend extended to middle-aged moms and even 'tween idol Miley Cyrus.

TEXTING: R u still rding this sty? Hope u r. This is the decade we start communicating in the shorthand of text messages. Get used to it: E-mail is so '00s.

TV SCREENS: Television screens became bigger and flatter, making some ordinary living rooms and dens the equivalent of big-studio screening rooms. At the same time, though, people were watching movies and videos on the tiniest screens imaginable, their iPods or other mobile devices.

'TWEEN CULTURE: 'Tweens, especially girls, became an economic force to be reckoned with, buying everything from clothes to electronic devices to music to concert tickets.

TWITTER: The new social network introduced tweets, retweets, follows and trending topics, as long as the message fit into 140 characters.

UGGS: Not since the Croc (see above) has functional footwear created such a frenzy. The fur-lined snowboots were everywhere, no matter the climate. Los Angelenos insisted on wearing them with shorts.

WII: In a sea of ever-more-sophisticated video games, this simple console became the decade's breakout hit by appealing to the nongaming masses. Wiis became a center of family gaming, home fitness and even senior socializing.

WIKIPEDIA: A boon to lazy students everywhere, the open-source encyclopedia used the masses to police its entries and keep them (mostly) (sometimes) accurate.

YOGA: Madonna, Gwyneth and other bendy celebrities brought the eastern practice mainstream. By the end of the decade, even Grandma could do downward-facing dogs on her Wii Fit.

YOUTUBE: Let's end this list and go kill some time by watching ... YouTube videos! The video-sharing site was born in 2005. Political candidates in 2008 even had their on YouTube channels. The most popular video yet: "Charlie Bit My Finger," in which baby Charlie bites the finger of his brother Harry.

GOT MORE? Tweet them to us at AP_Lifestyles

END OF DECADE:

IN THEN OUT

Napster, SUVs hot then not during decade

By DERRIK J. LANG
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—With more fads than folks at an "American Idol" audition, the past decade has been a difficult time to culturally define. One day, everyone was updating their MySpace profiles while sporting Ugg boots and sipping cosmopolitans. The next, they were creating Facebook pages while donning Ed Hardy T-shirts and downing energy drinks.

Superheroes, disaster movies, reality TV, professional wrestling and a boy wizard named Harry Potter weathered the decade's ever-changing pop culture storm while others rode the aughts like a roller coaster. Britney Spears was in, then out, then in again, advantageously morphing herself from teen queen to train wreck to pop diva within the 10-year span.

Others returned from yesteryear—or space, as in the case of the reinvigorated "Star Wars" and "Star Trek" franchises—to reclaim their pop culture glory. Not every entertainment hallmark was so successful in overcoming revolving taste buds. Here are 10 things that were oh-so-hot at the beginning of the '00s that turned totally cold by the bitter end:

■ "Wassup?" Those once funny Budweiser beer commercials had TV viewers growling "wassup?" after the campaign debuted at the end of 1999. The wacky greeting went on to face a barrage of parodies in the new millennium. The original "wassup?" dudes reteamed in 2008 for a viral video marking President Barack Obama's win before quickly fading back into obscurity.

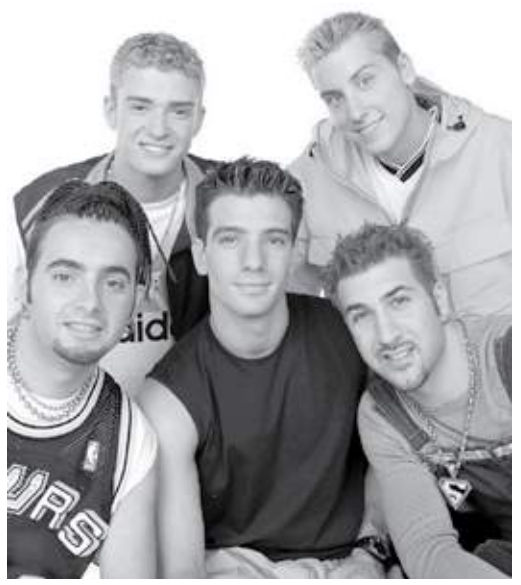
■ Napster. The free file-sharing service was the "it" way to grab digital tunes at the dawn of the 21st century. Created by 19-year-old Shawn Fanning, the program ignited a legal brouhaha with the recording industry. By the time Napster transformed into a subscription service, listeners had moved on to iTunes. Today, Napster is owned by Best Buy.

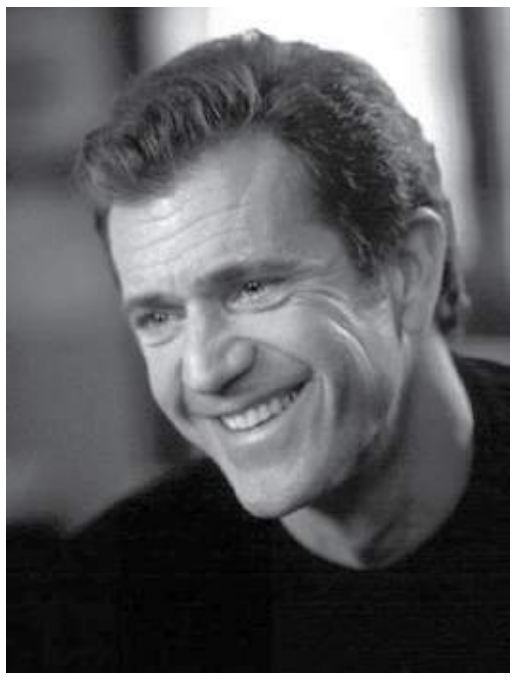
■ Sport Utility Vehicles. When gas was still cheap (below $2 a gallon for Americans), supersized rides enjoyed a passionate following among musicians, professional athletes and other celebrities who needed big cars to accommodate their big egos. As the green movement grew throughout the '00s, many stars traded in their gas-guzzling luxury SUVs for sleek eco-friendly hybrids.

■ "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" Fifty women vied to be the bride of mystery man Rick Rockwell, who picked nurse Darva Conger to wed in an impromptu 2000 ceremony that drew over 20 million viewers. The pair later annulled the marriage, and Fox opted against future installments. Viewers everywhere felt guilty for watching the sleazy TV spectacle.

■ Magazines. Long before the world was bookmarking blogs and social networking sites, glossy magazines were the pre-eminent place to learn about timely trends. The medium suffered as more folks went online and the economy went south. The end of the decade saw the demise of publications including Gourmet, CosmoGirl, Jane, Blender, Giant, Cookie and PC Magazine.

■ Nintendo GameCube. In 2001, five years before Nintendo revolutionized gaming with the Wii, the "Mario Bros." mastermind plopped down the GameCube, the Wii's itty-bitty precursor featuring a clunky controller. The console's robust graphics initially piqued players' interest, but the GameCube could not overcome Sony's mega-popular PlayStation 2 system.





■ Mel Gibson. The suave actor-director was riding high at the beginning of the aughts with "The Patriot," "What Women Want" and "The Passion of the Christ," but what he will likely be remembered most for this decade is his infamous slur-filled 2006 drunken driving arrest. After completing his three-year probation, Gibson's conviction was expunged in 2009.

■ Old Navy Performance Fleece. Complete with its own catchy jingle ("Old Navy! Old Navy! Performance fleece!"), it was the must-have affordable accessory. Now, no one would be caught dead in a "tech vest." And the retailer's celebrity commercial cameos—hey, look, it's Morgan Fairchild and Sherman Hemsley!—have been replaced by talking mannequins.

■ "Pokemon." The "pocket monster" franchise was a full-blown craze with kids at the start of the '00s, having already spawned several movies, TV series, video games and toys. Love for Pikachu waned, though, as tots turned into teens. "Pokemon 4Ever," the third "Pokeman" film, flopped at the box office and subsequent sequels went direct to DVD in the U.S.

■ 'NSync. The boy band jump-started the '00s with the album "No Strings Attached," which continues to hold the record for biggest first-week CD sales at 2.4 million. Another album and a few tours later, the quintet quietly disbanded. They spent the rest of the aughts pursuing solo careers while simultaneously addressing reunion rumors. Maybe next decade?!

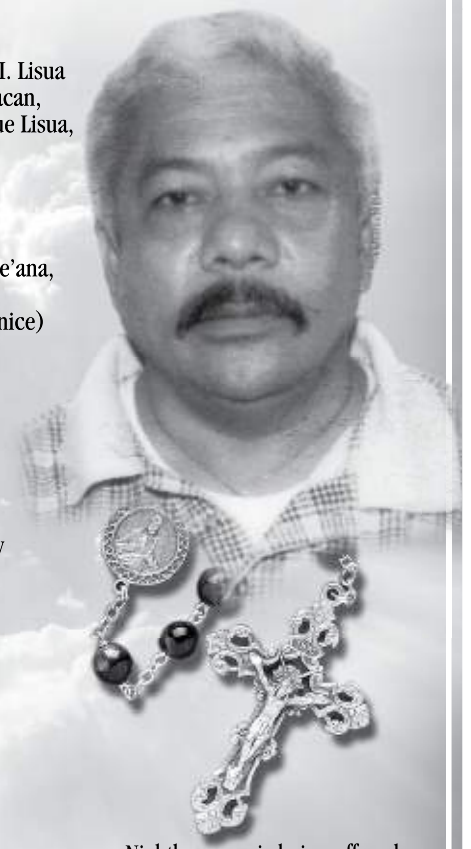
IN LOVING MEMORY

Roque Abel Sablan Celis

"Naki"

Born: January 01, 1952

Called home by His Creator on December 28, 2009 at the age of 57



He now joins his:

Parents: †Francisca & †Obed Celis
Parents In Law: †Theodora I. Lisua & †Jesus I. Lisua
Brothers/ Sisters In Law: †Juan Lizama, †Antonio Taisacan, †Joseph San Nicolas, †Enrique Lisua, †Marcelo Lisua

He will be dearly missed and forvever remembered in the hearts of his:

Wife: Remedio Lisua Celis
Children: Isidora & Gary (Roquelle, Gail, Octayvia, Le'ana, Gary Jr. And Cecilia)
Roy & Youlani (Remylyn, Roque Jr. And Lynice)
Janice Renee L. Celis
Julie & Jd (Timika, Nakisha,jaedi)
David Jason L. Celis

Brother(S) / Sister(S) and Family
Carmen & Juan Lizama and Family
Rosalina & Frank Mesa and Family
Maria & Joaquin Delos Santos and Family
Bernadita & Martin San Nicolas and Family
Dolores & Joseph San Nicolas and Family
Abel & Flora Celis and Family
Mariano & Karen Celis and Family
Agaton & Judelyn Celis and Family
Ignacio & Lynn Celis and Family

Brother(S) / Sister(S) In Law:
Agnes Pangelinan and Family
†Marcelo And Ursula T. Lisua and Family
†Enrique I. Lisua
Nicanor & Prepedigna Lisua and Family
Abelina I. Lisua and Family
Benusto Lisua & Francisca Sn. Nicolas and Family
Virginia & Raymond Lizama and Family
Felipe & Alily Lisua and Family

God Parents: Victorina Borja & †Gabriel Borja
†Lydia Pangelinan & Juan Pagelinan

He is survived by numerous aunties, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and god childrens.

Nightly rosary is being offered at 8:00 p.m. at his residence in Koblerville. On January 5th, 2009, his remains will be escorted from CHC morgue at 7:30 a.m. to his residence followed by Mass intention at 3:00 p.m. at Saint Jude Church.

Jackson's death voted top 2009 entertainment story

Here are 2009's top entertainment stories as voted by U.S. newspaper and broadcast editors surveyed by The Associated Press.

1 MICHAEL JACKSON DIES

On June 25, Jackson was pronounced dead at the age of 50. One of the most momentous and shocking deaths in pop culture history, the event reverberated in many ways. There was the ongoing investigation: Jackson's death was ruled a homicide, and his personal physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, who says he's innocent of wrongdoing, is being investigated for manslaughter. There was the gigantic Los Angeles funeral. There was the documentary, "This Is It," of Jackson's preparations for a comeback concert series. But, perhaps most of all, there was the celebration of his music, on stages and sidewalks the world over.

2 SUSAN BOYLE BECOMES OVERNIGHT SENSATION

Two 21st-century powers—reality TV and the Web—combined to turn the humble, unknown Boyle into an international star. After Boyle sang "I Dreamed a Dream" on "Britain's Got Talent" on April 11, the clip spread like wildfire online, totaling more than 120 million views on YouTube. Her album, released in November, had the best opening week sales of a female debut in decades.

3 LATE-NIGHT SWAP

On NBC, Conan O'Brien took over the "Tonight" show, and Jay Leno moved to 10 p.m. All the fanfare may have been overdone, though: At year's end, neither was receiving good ratings.

4 WALTER CRONKITE DIES

The passing on July 17 of Cronkite, a paragon of journalism and a father figure to a nation, was not only the sad loss of a universally acknowledged great man but was a reminder of a bygone era in broadcasting.

5 DAVID LETTERMAN AFFAIR

Letterman's Oct. 1 announcement on his "Late Show" carried two bombshells: He alleged that he had been the victim of an extortion attempt, and he confessed to having affairs with women on his staff. Letterman, who hasn't shied from the subject on air, saw some of his best ratings in years. The man accused of trying to blackmail Letterman, Robert J. "Joe" Halderman, says he was just shopping a screenplay.

6 CHRIS BROWN ASSAULTS RIHANNA

The big story on Grammy night in 2009 didn't take place on stage but outside the ceremony. Chris Brown assaulted then-girlfriend Rihanna, an altercation that led to Brown pleading guilty to felony assault in June. Both R&B stars were in comeback mode before the year was out, releasing new albums just weeks apart.

7 KANYE WEST ROBS TAYLOR SWIFT

Bad behavior, not awards, also ruled the story line at the MTV Video Music Awards. When a stage-crashing West interrupted Swift's acceptance speech for best female video, the rapper clearly underestimated the negative reaction he would inspire.

8 LIVE VIDEO EXPLODES ON THE WEB

One of the biggest trends in online video was the emergence of demand—and supply—for live video. Live online video particularly suited daytime news events (when people are at work in front of computers). Millions online watched the inauguration of President Barack Obama and the funeral of Michael Jackson.

9 KATE AND JON GOSSELIN BROADCAST SPLIT

One of reality TV's latest sensations fell apart just as it was reaching fruition. TLC's "Jon & Kate Plus 8" was winning its best ratings in its fifth season when the Gosselins—parents of eight children—announced their separation. With more than 10 million viewers, that episode earned the show its best ratings. Arguments in the divorce, which became final in December, have thus far prevented the show from continuing. TLC hopes to debut a show for Kate Gosselin in the spring.

10 HEATH LEDGER WINS POSTHUMOUS OSCAR

Ledger, whose death topped the poll of 2008's top entertainment stories, remained a presence in 2009, when he won an Oscar for best-supporting actor for his performance as the Joker in "The Dark Knight."

AP

Singer Janet Jackson, left, Paris Katherine Jackson, Prince Michael Jackson II, and LaToya Jackson are seen on stage during the memorial service for Michael Jackson at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, in this July 7, 2009 file photo.

'Mad Men,' 'Modern Family' among year's best TV shows

By FRAZIER MOORE
AP TELEVISION WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—The biggest shows of 2009 couldn't always be contained by the TV screen. There were breakout tabloid scandals with Jon and Kate Gosselin. A wannabe reality TV star crashed the White House. David Letterman's hanky-panky seized headlines. Oprah Winfrey grabbed attention as she began her long goodbye. This was TV run amok.

But in 2009 other shows proved outstanding on more manageable terms: as excellent TV shows. They include:

■ "**Breaking Bad**" (AMC) Here's the cruelest premise on series TV: a high-school teacher with terminal cancer gets into the crystal-meth trade as a desperate scheme to make sure his family is financially secure after he dies. Against all odds, in its second season, this drama upped the danger level, getting even stranger, more addictive and, yes, even funnier.

■ "**Curb Your Enthusiasm**" (HBO). This season, "Curb" creator-writer-star Larry David outdid himself. A creator of "Seinfeld" in another age, he reunited his "Seinfeld" cast and interlaced his old show with his current one for a brilliant story line that gave "Seinfeld" fans what they had craved for a decade: an acceptable finale for that beloved comedy.

■ "**Damages**" (FX). Guest star William Hurt brought new shadings and power to this diabolical legal thriller in its riveting second season. Glenn Close and Rose Byrne stood tall as the series' leading ladies, playing at-odds, full-of-intrigue lawyers in a cutthroat litigation firm.

■ "**The Good Wife**" (CBS). It stars Julianna Margulies as a wife and mother forced to resume her long-ago career as an attorney in the wake of betrayal when her politician hubby, played by Chris Noth, is jailed for corruption and philandering. But what makes it more than a formula legal drama, and more than a series struggling for relevance by using current events as a dramatic contrivance, is smart writing and a splendid cast. That's a solid formula.

■ "**The Late Late Show With Craig Ferguson**" (CBS). The best late-night talk show was better than ever this year, and Ferguson's winning ratings reflected it. The Scottish-born late-night host, who insists he's not a late-night host but something else, is clearly gifted at it. He's brilliant, shrewd, silly and charismatic—as anyone knows who saw him bonding with a guest not usually seen on late-night TV, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

■ "**Lost**" (ABC). Another wacky, wacked-out season that showed no concern for time and space constraints and left the viewer's head reeling. The mind-boggling action on the island, and beyond, set things up for the final season in 2010 which—here's hoping—will bring everything home.

■ "**Mad Men**" (AMC). Modern living 1960s style got even darker and more gripping this season as the Kennedy presidency ended in Dallas and, in New York City, ad man Don Draper's world seemed to be collapsing.

■ "**Modern Family**" (ABC). Three households, all unconventional, are blended into this fall's freshest family comedy. Ed O'Neill and Julie Bowen are among the stars perched on this sitcom family tree.

■ "**The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**" (HBO). This charming and uplifting drama told of Precious Ramotswe (Jill Scott), a plucky private eye. Operating from her storefront office on the outskirts of the Botswanan city of Gaborone, she dedicates herself to helping those who need help the most. Her good will proved as infectious as her cases.

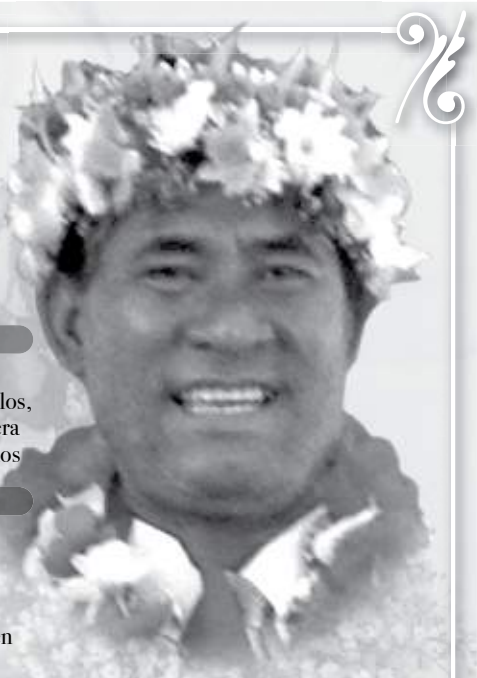
■ "**Sons of Anarchy**" (FX). "The Sopranos" on Harleys? It's all that and more, telling the saga of a fierce and fiercely close-knit motorcycle club just trying to make ends meet as they do business in the curiously named town of Charming, California.

Death & Funeral Announcement

In Loving Memory of Retired PSS Teacher and

Pastor Osaky Keller

April 23, 1960 – December 23, 2009, of Pohnpei,
and present resident of Dandan, Saipan, was called to rest at the
Commonwealth Health Center by our Heavenly Father at the age of 49.



Pre-Deceased:

Father: Makes Keller,
Mother: Kinie Keller
Sister: Kimiko Keller Jerry
Father-in-Law: Estanislao Gays Scaliem

Brothers-in-Law: Shaid Jerry, Deniel Handy, Ansber Diopulos, Joseph Joseph, Jose M. Cabrera
Nephews: Endris Handy, Gerald Diopulos

Lovingly survived by his:

Wife: Mildred Scaliem Keller
Children , Spouses and Grandchildren:
Osaky Keller Junior
Gayson, wife Nancy and daughters: Miltrisia, Kaylani, and son Gaynan
Melvin Keller
Joshua Keller
McMillen Keller

Siblings:
Mrs. Eriko Handy and children
Makir/Elizabeth Keller and children
Nihlis/Jenny Keller Ernest and children
Mathias/Sihna Keller Lawrence and children
Mrs. Erina Keller Diopulos and children
Kosaky /Pelmihna Keller and children
Keisilihna Keller Joseph and children
Kosak/Anako Keller and children
Sakies Keller and children
Mrs. Kiniorihda/Nahsar Keller Yens and children
Kelly/Aneleen Keller and children
Yokorihda Keller and children

Mother-in-Law: Mariana E. Scaliem
Brothers –and-Sisters-in-Law: Nora E. Scaliem/daughter; Flora e. Scaliem/children; Margaret S.Cabrera/children; Steven E. Scaliem/daughter; Fernando E. & Maylyn Scaliem/children; Maria Ines O. &Stanley Scpin/children; Rosaly F. & Johnny Isaac/children; Christina S. Elnei/son; Leon E. & Leilyn Scaliem/children; Lida E. Scaliem; MacGarry E. Scaliem & Jane Isaac/children; Stanley E. & Linda Scaliem/children;.

On Friday, January 1, 2010, at 4:00 pm Pastor Osaky's remains will be escorted from Commonwealth Health Center to his residence in lower Dandan. A Wake will be held through out the evening.

On Saturday, January 2, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. his remains will be taken to the United Church of Christ Pohnpei/Saipan Church, in Kanat Tabla. The Memorial Service will begin at 10:00 a.m., immediately followed by a burial service at the Tanapag Cemetery.

Your thoughts and prayers are deeply appreciated.

Mildred S. Keller, Children and Families.

Kanye, Tiger, the Gosselins: Our unfortunate 2009

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
AP MUSIC WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—If only there were more Kanye Wests in the world.

No wait—lemme finish!! Yes, West proved he was a complete jerk when he jumped onstage and interrupted Taylor Swift's glory moment at the MTV Video Music Awards. It was a moment audiences live to see.

But what if the rapper could have interrupted those other moments we didn't want to see? Then we wouldn't be nursing scarred brains caused by 2009's worst moments, such as: a smiling Joe Jackson hawking his record label for cameras a few days after his son Michael's death; octo-dad Jon Goesslin's creepy transformation from henpecked husband to sleazy bachelor; any of Chris Brown's halfhearted apologies; Tiger Woods' transgressions of the heart.

A sampling of more Wacky & Tacky:

TIGER'S SWING

Did you ever think we'd be handicapping Tiger's mistresses instead of his golf game? Sports' ultimate boy scout became the tabloid gift that kept on giving when a bizarre car accident outside his home started a chain that revealed he had more side dishes than an all-you-can-eat buffet. From porn stars to waitresses, the married father-of-two may showed that his conquests included more than the world of golf.

THIS IS WHY THEY INVENTED THE TERM "NO COMMENT"

Let's be honest—when you expect sage social and political commentary from a beauty contestant, you've got a problem (see Sarah Palin). But it's bizarre that Carrie Prejean's anti-gay marriage stance at a Miss USA pageant seemed to set off more fury than when the same sentiments were uttered by any of America's elected officials (including the president). Still, it's hard to feel sorry for Prejean, who latched on to the family values contingent, but then it was revealed that she had breast implants, nude photos and a solo sex tape. The only thing she wasn't accused of being was one of Tiger's mistresses. But give it time: The list is still growing.

MAYBE CHINA WAS RIGHT

Sure, a one-child policy might seem a little extreme, but after watching the questionable to downright scary parenting skills of "Octomom" Nadya Suleman and Jon and Kate Gosselin of "Jon & Kate Plus 8" fame, maybe the United States needs to follow China's lead. All three used the celebrity of their multiple-birth children to stay in the limelight. But karma will soon catch up—in the form of multiple teenagers.

REALITY SHOW FAIL-BALLOON BOY

It's hard to blame Richard and Mayumi Heene—the parents in the infamous balloon boy hoax—for making up the ludicrous plot that their 6-year-old son was floating away in a balloon to garner attention from the press in hopes of getting a reality show. After all, if they watched "Real Housewives," ''For the Love of Ray J," ''The Hills" or just about any other reality show, there is so much fiction they probably thought their hoax was an appropriate audition. Instead it might get them jail time. But they're so entertaining, let's hope whatever prison they land in allows for cell cameras.

FATHER OF THE YEAR

Even Joe Jackson would shake his head at the shenanigans of this year's winner, Jon Gosselin. The father of eight declared he was standing up for himself by breaking free from his bullying wife Kate—and then proceeded to act so shamelessly we jumped on the Team Kate bandwagon. He was linked to a young teacher BEFORE they announced their split, took up with a hard-partying twenty-something and then cheated on HER—with a tabloid reporter. He also made the most of his newfound bachelorhood by partying in Vegas (with college girls and his mom), all while trying to defend his honor as a good dad.

APOLOGY FAIL

When you've done something as heinous as attack your girlfriend, you'd better have your "I'm sorry" game on point. Singer Chris Brown was woefully off-message with his apologies for beating Rihanna—you could almost see the "let me tell you what REALLY happened" look in his eyes. Tweeting that he still loved the woman he attacked also didn't endear him to fans. Even Ike knew when to leave Tina alone.

"YES I'M ON THE LIST" REALLY DOES WORK

Tareqand Michelle Salahi shocked the society world—and the White House—when they managed to crash the first state dinner by President Obama, despite a guest list that required security clearance and Secret Service screening. All we can say is—big deal. White House security has nothing on entertainment's clipboard-carrying publicists. If they manage to crash a Diddy party, then that's worth talking about.

AT LEAST WE HAVE JERMAJESTY

We all mourned the loss this year of one of the world's most gifted artists, Michael Jackson, and his loss resonates as well—the man provided us with a wealth of material every year. Jackson's death showed us that along with his music, the craziness will also live on. The Jackson family kept his body on ice for more than two months so they could have another memorial that cost more than $1 million, Jermaine Jackson tried to mount a tribute show to his brother that fizzled, LaToya mugged for camera time, Jackson's dermatologist dished on his former patients and the remaining four of the five living Jackson brothers had a reality show by year's end. Can anyone say, "Off the Wall"?

CELEBRITY OF THE YEAR

In an age where celebrities detail their bikini waxes in interviews and debut their new implants at premieres, it was refreshing to see an ungroomed, portly woman from across the Atlantic become the year's biggest sensation. Susan Boyle proved to anyone worried that talentless opportunists were taking over our entertainment world that sometimes, talent does trump looks, substance can rise above style and a voice can win out over auto-tune. But even she wasn't immune to celebrity pitfalls—she had the prerequisite nervous breakdown at the height of her success. Welcome to the club, Susan! You are now official.

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Sherlock Holmes
Friday & Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:05 9:55
Sunday 1:05 4:05 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:05
Robert Downey, Jr., Jude Law
Action, Mystery • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous super-sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, gets an update with this adaptation of Lionel Wigram's comic book series by writer/director Guy Ritchie (RocknRolla) starring Robert Downey Jr. as the titular detective, with Jude Law stepping into the shoes of his sidekick, Dr. Watson. Heading up the rest of the cast are RocknRolla's Mark Strong as the film's villain, Blackwood, and Rachel McAdams portraying the love interest, Irene Adler.

It's Complicated
Friday & Saturday 1:30 4:20 7:10 9:40
Sunday 1:30 4:20 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:10
Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin
Comedy • Rated R
Synopsis
Veteran writer/director Nancy Meyers (Something's Gotta Give, What Women Want) returns to familiar romantic comedy territory with this untitled production for Universal Pictures starring Meryl Streep as a woman who finds herself caught in the middle of dual romantic advances from two suitors (played by Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin).

Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Sqeakquel
Friday & Saturday 1:15 4:15 7:25 9:30
Sunday 1:15 4:15 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:25
Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler
Children, Family • Rated PG
Synopsis
The lovable singing-and-dancing trio of famous marmots continues their big-screen hijinks with this follow-up to the 20th Century Fox smash-hit live-action/CG family comedy, this time incorporating a female version of the group entitled the Chipettes. Dr. Dolittle's Betty Thomas helms with Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler, and Jesse McCartney returning as the voices of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore.

Avatar
Friday & Saturday 12:50 3:55 6:55 10:00
Sunday 12:50 3:55 6:55
Mon thru Thurs 3:55 6:55
Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana
Science Fiction • Rated PG 13

Did You Hear About The Morgans?
Friday & Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:30 9:50
Sunday 1:20 4:10 7:30
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:30
Hugh Grant, Sarah Jessica Parker
Comedy • Rated PG 13

The Princess And The Frog
Friday & Saturday 1:10 4:30 7:20 9:35
Sunday 1:10 4:30 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:20
Anika Noni Rose, John Goodman
Comedy, Family • Rated G

Twilight Saga: New Moon
Friday & Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:45
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:00
Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart
Thriller, Romance • Rated PG 13

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Jamie Foxx's 'Blame it' among best singles of 2009

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
AP MUSIC WRITER

1. "Blame It," Jamie Foxx (featuring T-Pain): If Jay-Z is right, and Auto-Tune is really D.O.A., Jamie Foxx's "Blame It" with T-Pain was a heck of a send-off: This politically incorrect, glorified alcohol ad was also the perfect party starter that aged like a fine wine.

2. "The Point of It All," Anthony Hamilton: An amazing love song anchored by perhaps the most soulful voice of this generation. Hamilton captures all the emotion of this song's moving lyrics without oversinging and, with simplicity, he delivers something that is magical and beautiful.

3. "Pretty Wings," Maxwell: A luscious, bittersweet ballad that was the perfect re-entry for Maxwell after an eight-year layoff.

4. "Boom Boom Pow," Black Eyed Peas: Hello? They deserve it just for introducing the phrase "you're so two-thousand-and-late" into the lexicon. Thank you, Fergie!

5. "Shuttin Detroit Down," John Rich: Rich's tone may be low-key, but the anger, frustration and bitterness is on high-tilt in this stirring anthem about what the collapse of the economy has done to the working class.

6. "Poker Face," Lady Gaga: Lady Gaga may be single-handedly responsible for making disco music cool again, and this song was her best calling card, with a pulsating beat and that irresistible, stuttering hook.

7. "Empire State of Mind," Jay-Z featuring Alicia Keys: Any song that gets the Yankees their 27th championship merits a mention, but Jay-Z created an anthem that united more than New Yorkers with a mix of his classic braggadocio, plus a soaring chorus courtesy of Keys.

8. "Gunpowder and Lead," Miranda Lambert: Lambert has always been one of the more feisty among country's young, blond entertainers — and among the most talented. Here, she displays both qualities with her firecracker of a song directed to those no-good, cheating, women-beating men.

9. "Chocolate High," India. Arie and Musiq Soulchild: This duet using chocolate and a love metaphor was sexy and sweet without being too sugary, and the blend of India and Musiq's voice is a recipe that never fails.

10. "There Goes My Baby," Charlie Wilson: That clear tenor that made so many hits for the Gap bands still works wonders, as it does for this classy song that sounds like a throwback from a more soulful era.

'Thriller,' Muppets among 25 in US film registry

WASHINGTON (AP)—Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video, with that unforgettable graveyard dance, will rest among the nation's treasures in the world's largest archive of film, TV and sound recordings.

The 1983 music video directed by John Landis, though still the subject of lawsuits over profits, was one of 25 films to be inducted Wednesday for preservation in the 2009 National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.

It's the first music video named to the registry. It had been considered in past years, but following Jackson's death, the time was right, said Steve Leggett, coordinator of the National Film Preservation Board.

"Because of the way the recording industry is evolving and changing, we thought it would be good to go back to the development of an earlier seismic shift, which was the development of the music video," he said.

Joining the King of Pop in the 2009 class will be the Muppets from 1979's "The Muppet Movie"—the first time on the big screen for Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy—and the 1957 sci-fi classic "The Incredible Shrinking Man," among other titles.

AP

In this file photo from July 9, 2008, Kermit the Frog is seen at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

The library works with film archives and movie studios to ensure original copies are kept safe. It also acquires a copy for preservation in its own vaults among millions of other recordings at the Packard Campus of the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center in the hills near Culpeper, Va.

"By preserving the nation's films, we safeguard a significant element of our cultural patrimony and history," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington.

Congress established the registry in 1989, which now totals 525 films. They are selected not as the "best" American films but instead for their enduring importance to U.S. culture.

The library selects films that are "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant after reviewing hundreds of titles nominated by the public and consulting with the National Film Preservation Board.

Report: Rush Limbaugh taken to Hawaii hospital

HONOLULU (AP)—A Honolulu television station is reporting that conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh was taken to a hospital with chest pains.

KITV reported Wednesday that paramedics responded to a call at 2:41 p.m. from the Kahala Hotel and Resort where Limbaugh is vacationing.

The station, citing unnamed sources, said paramedics treated Limbaugh and took him to The Queen's Medical Center in serious condition.

Queen's spokesman N. Makana Shook says the hospital is unable to comment on the report.

Limbaugh was seen golfing at Waialae Country Club earlier this week. The country club is next to the Kahala Hotel and Resort.

Spielberg, Kidman to present at Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Steven Spielberg, Nicole Kidman and "Avatar" star Sam Worthington are joining the list of celebrity presenters at the Golden Globe Awards.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which puts on the Golden Globes, says the three stars will help hand out trophies at the 67th annual ceremony.

They join previously announced presenters Jennifer Aniston, Halle Berry, Julia Roberts, Mickey Rourke, Colin Farrell, Matthew Fox, Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro.

The Golden Globe Awards will be held Jan. 17 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills and will air live on NBC.

'Lost,' 'Idol' and Ozzy among decade's TV Top 10

By FRAZIER MOORE, LYNN ELBER
AP TELEVISION WRITERS

Mostly excellent, all of them memorable, here are the decade's Top 10 television achievements as tapped by the TV writers of The Associated Press.

In no particular order, they are:

■ "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" (premiered October 2000) and the franchise it inspired. This drama was already a surprise hit when, with season two, it emerged as a reassuring response to the sorrows and anxieties that followed the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The Las Vegas-based investigators functioned with a clinical detachment from evil and evildoers, while insisting that truth and justice await those who pursue it with keen-eyed devotion. That was just the sort of reminder viewers needed. And apparently still do, with "CSI" remaining a powerhouse for CBS, along with its spinoffs, "CSI: Miami" (premiered September 2002) and "CSI: NY" (September 2004), where science, reason (plus blood-and-guts) prevail.

■ "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" (yes, we know he came aboard in 1999) and "The Colbert Report" (premiered October 2005). Weeknights on Comedy Central, this one-two satirical punch helps keep viewers abreast of all the foolishness they suffer at the hands of the media — and at the hands of newsmakers the media cover.

■ "Survivor" (premiered May 2000). It began with personalities such as Rudy, Richard Susan and, of course, host Jeff Probst, on an island near Borneo. Now, 18-and-counting editions later, CBS' "Survivor" doesn't just endure as the pioneer of TV reality-competition, it prevails as the gold standard.

■ "American Idol" (premiered June 2002). It's bigger than Simon Cowell's proudly brandished biceps. It's bigger than the audience's sigh of relief when Paula Abdul finally severed her ties. It's maybe not quite as big as it once was, but after eight editions, Fox's "American Idol" is bigger than almost anything else on TV, while continuing to transform pop culture in a big way.

■ "High School Musical" (January 2006). If "American Idol" didn't get the nation singing, this shockingly popular Disney Channel film did — that is, teens and tweens, who, along with gorging on the original film and its sequels (with a fourth installment due next year), have put on a high school musical themselves in seemingly every auditorium in the land.

■ "The Osbournes" (2002-05). Poor addled Ozzy couldn't even handle his TV remote. But viewers were able to operate theirs, and, switching to MTV in droves, they made a huge hit out of this rock star's kookie family life. Meanwhile, its wild success crystallized a new sub-genre of reality TV, populated by the likes of Tommy Lee, Victoria Gotti, Danny Bonaduce, Hulk Hogan, Whitney Houston and so many more: Celebrities masquerading as themselves while they pretend their act isn't just another slice of show biz.

■ "The Sopranos" (1999-2007). Yes, it started before the millennium, but genius doesn't always arrive at a turning point, but, instead, is one. Anyway, most of "The Sopranos" aired in 2000 and beyond — including the infamous, maddening blackout finale, which, all by itself, guaranteed this HBO mob drama a place in pop-culture perpetuity.

■ "The Shield" (2002-2008). No drama series reached further with a surer hand, week after week. Consistently absorbing, exciting and disturbing, this Los Angeles-based cop show remade the image of its network, FX, kick-started the career of its star, Michael Chiklis, and proved that basic cable could compete not only with the premium channels, but also with the best of cinema. Thanks to "The Shield," viewers were given notice not to accept anything less.

■ "Arrested Development" (2003-06). A send-up of human vanities, greed and corruption, this Fox comedy about the unlikely Bluth clan stayed amusingly askew, pokerfaced and absurd. It could claim neither long-term nor widespread success, but there was something groundbreakingly demented about it. Charting new ground, it prepared the way for oddball comedies to come, such as NBC's "The Office" and "30 Rock." The Bluths were comedically bent trailblazers.

■ "Lost" (premiered September 2004). From its first episode (the dreadful plane crash on the island), this ABC drama demonstrated an epic, mind-bending sweep through time and space, with a vast array of characters. It doesn't always make sense (though maybe it will, with the series finale next year), but "Lost" has made one thing clear: With serialized TV, nothing is too way out or ambitious.

New year offers each of us the chance for a fresh start

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR READERS: Can you believe it's 2010? It's the 10th anniversary of Y2K. It seems like only yesterday.... But a new year has arrived, bringing with it our chance for a new beginning.

Today is the day we discard destructive old habits for healthy new ones, so with that in mind, I will share Dear Abby's often-requested list of New Year's Resolutions -- which were adapted by my mother, Pauline Phillips, from the original credo of Al-Anon.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will live through this day only. I will not brood about yesterday or obsess about tomorrow. I will not set far-reaching goals or try to overcome all of my problems at once.

I know that I can do something for 24 hours that would overwhelm me if I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will be happy. I will not dwell on thoughts that depress me. If my mind fills with clouds, I will chase them away and fill it with sunshine.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept what is. I will face reality. I will correct those things that I can correct and accept those I cannot.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will improve my mind. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration. I will not be a mental loafer.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make a conscious effort to be agreeable. I will be kind and courteous to those who cross my path, and I'll not speak ill of others. I will improve my appearance, speak softly, and not interrupt when someone else is talking.

Just for today, I will refrain from improving anybody but myself.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will do something positive to improve my health. If I'm a smoker, I'll quit. If I am overweight, I will eat healthfully—if only just for today. And not only that, I will get off the couch and take a brisk walk, even if it's only around the block.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will gather the courage to do what is right and take responsibility for my own actions.

And now, Dear Readers, I would like to share an item that was sent to me by I.J. Bhatia, a reader who lives in New Delhi, India:

DEAR ABBY: This year, no resolutions, only some guidelines. The Holy Vedas say, "Man has subjected himself to thousands of self-inflicted bondages. Wisdom comes to a man who lives according to the true eternal laws of nature."

The prayer of St. Francis (of which there are several versions) contains a powerful message:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
"where there is hatred, let me sow love,
"where there is injury, pardon;
"where there is doubt, faith;
"where there is despair, hope;
"where there is darkness, light;
"and where there is sadness, joy.
"O Divine Master,
"grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
"to be understood, as to understand;
"to be loved, as to love;
"for it is in giving that we receive,
"it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
"and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life."

And so, Dear Readers, may this new year bring with it peace and joy to all of you.—Love, ABBY

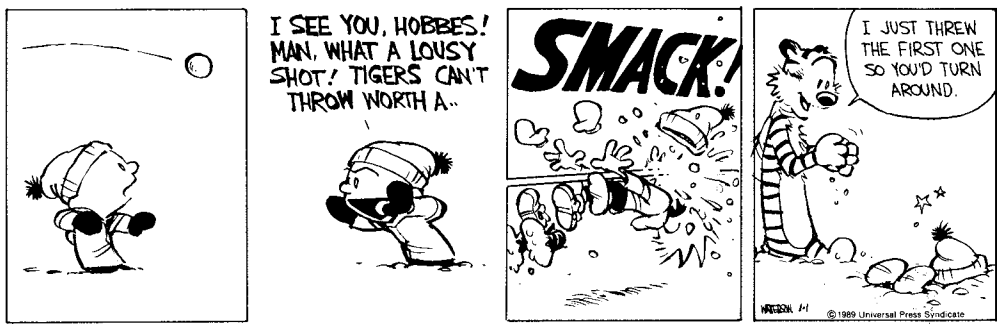
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


I SEE YOU, HOBBES! MAN, WHAT A LOUSY SHOT! TIGERS CAN'T THROW WORTH A..
SMACK!
I JUST THREW THE FIRST ONE SO YOU'D TURN AROUND.
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Garfield®

By Jim Davis

WELL, GARFIELD, WE SURVIVED ANOTHER HOLIDAY SEASON
NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SURVIVE ANOTHER YEAR
OR JUST TODAY
HAVE I TOLD YOU HOW MUCH I ENJOY THESE LITTLE PEP TALKS?
JIM DAVIS 1-1
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www.garfield.com
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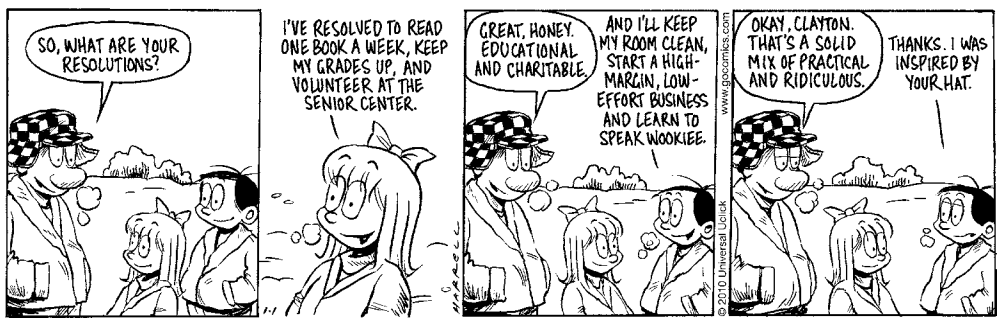
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


SO, WHAT ARE YOUR RESOLUTIONS?
I'VE RESOLVED TO READ ONE BOOK A WEEK, KEEP MY GRADES UP, AND VOLUNTEER AT THE SENIOR CENTER.
GREAT, HONEY. EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE.
AND I'LL KEEP MY ROOM CLEAN, START A HIGH-MARGIN, LOW-EFFORT BUSINESS AND LEARN TO SPEAK WOOKIEE.
OKAY, CLAYTON. THAT'S A SOLID MIX OF PRACTICAL AND RIDICULOUS.
THANKS. I WAS INSPIRED BY YOUR HAT.
www.gocomics.com
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The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I will not be overly critical of others.
I won't interfere in other people's lives.
WRITING YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS?
NO. YOURS.
1-1
www.ucomics.com
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Schuster's partner
6 Decked, à la Ali
9 Cleo's slayer
12 Bakery lure
13 Rhyming honor
14 Carnival city
15 Doctrine
16 Cur
18 Brian Williams, e.g.
20 Wander
21 Spring mo.
23 Scuttle
24 Fixed a seam
25 Ness is one
27 "Water Lilies" painter
29 For some time
31 "The — Cometh"
35 Odin's worshippers
37 Theater box
38 Ballroom dance
41 Subordinate Claus
43 Promptly
44 Reed instrument
45 Bunsen burner, e.g.
47 Windy, rainy season
49 City in Japan
52 Night before
53 Joan of —
54 Arrested
55 Collection
56 Catcher's place
57 Two-somes

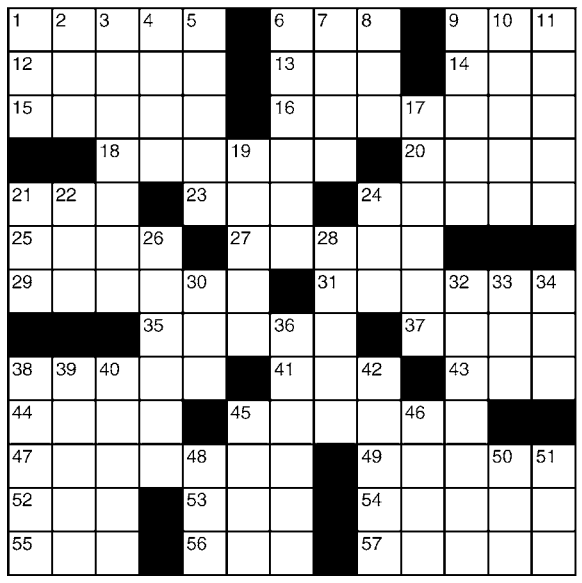
DOWN

1 Perched
2 Anger
3 Crowned head
4 Bad sign
5 "Yeah, sure"
6 Dragon's home in Indonesia
7 Stench
8 Lair
9 Pointer
10 Colander
11 Moved a gondola
17 Fairy-tale sibling
19 He works for Mr. Burns
21 Carte lead-in
22 "Wham!"
24 Moment
26 Depends (on)
28 Physicist Bohr
30 Privy
32 Quarterback Joe
33 In bygone times
34 Fresh
36 Rap session?
38 Heavy reading
39 Overhead
40 Three trios
42 Inlet between cliffs
45 Like the "Saw" movies
46 Birthright barterer
48 Rowing need
50 Tease
51 Reply (Abbr.)

Solution time: 25 mins.

P	R	E	P		C	R	Y		A	B	L	E
A	U	R	A		R	O	E		F	E	U	D
S	N	I	P		O	W	L		F	L	A	G
S	T	E	A	M	S		P	R	A	G	U	E
			Y	E	S			I	I	I		
C	U	B	A		B	E	L	G	R	A	D	E
A	T	E			O	V	A			N	U	N
B	E	L	L	O	W	E	D		U	S	E	D
		L	O	W			Y	O	N			
E	C	H	O	E	D		B	R	I	D	L	E
C	O	O	T		E	M	U		Q	U	I	T
R	O	P	E		L	A	G		U	L	N	A
U	S	S	R		I	T	S		E	Y	E	S

Yesterday's answer 1-1



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Verne Troyer, 41; Dedee Pfeiffer, 46; Grandmaster Flash, 52; Rick Hurst, 64

Happy Birthday: It's a new year and a new beginning. Put your talents to the test and start the year off with a bang. Use your intuition to guide you into the future with optimism, patience and the willingness to believe in yourself. Your strength of character coupled with your ability to take on a challenge should win the support needed for whatever race you've entered. Your numbers are 6, 8, 11, 20, 32, 36, 44

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You may feel dragged down by the past and what you have had to endure but it's essential that you close the door to the memories that are holding you back. Recognize and appreciate what's ahead of you. ✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Share your thoughts with the people you see playing an integral part in your life this year. Toast to a healthy, happy and prosperous year, sharing what you hope to achieve. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You need to consider broadening your geographic professional destinations. A chance to sign a contract is apparent if you apply for something out of your jurisdiction. Don't let obstacles stand in the way of your progress. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Say goodbye to old habits and people and places no longer beneficial to you. Looking ahead may be frightening but, once you make the alterations, you will wonder what took you so long. The future looks bright. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You may need to take a time out to rejuvenate and prepare for the upcoming week. Reflect, rethink and reorganize until you have everything ready to go. Overindulgence of any kind will leave you unprepared and behind schedule. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Make decisions, statements and a motion to start the ball rolling. It's the way you deal with others that will enable you to open doors and set the stage for a stellar year. Practical, patient and pensive will lead to success. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): If you go looking for trouble, you will find it. Steer clear of anyone who is pressuring you or giving you an ultimatum. Emotions will be high and tempers short if you are around people who are overindulgent. ✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't sit around waiting for things to happen. Make your plans and follow through. A trip or getting together with neighbors or friends will help you clear up some matters that have you concerned and you can begin the new year on the right foot. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Something or someone you least expect will leave you in an awkward position. Be ready to make a few last-minute changes that will protect you from an emotional burden. Creative accounting will buy you time. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Moderation, practicality and keeping things simple will be the answer to a bigger and better future. Changes made now are long overdue but will be certain to bring about positive results as you reach your destination. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): It's time for you to set goals and to put an end to the things that are no longer in your best interest. By helping others, you will generate future favors, enabling you to attain your own personal and professional goals. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): The help you offer those in need will be appreciated and reciprocated. Your presence at functions that require time, effort and services will help you get projects (that were impossible in the past) off the ground in the near future. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, a planner and a thinker. You stand at the front of the line, willing to take on any challenge that comes your way. You are compassionate.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			1		6	3		
3				5		9		
	5					1		
		8		1				
6			9		5			2
				7		4		
		4					1	
		5		4				8
		2	5		8			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 1/01

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

2	6	7	5	3	1	9	4	8
1	9	4	2	8	6	3	7	5
3	8	5	4	9	7	1	2	6
6	7	2	9	1	8	5	3	4
5	1	9	3	7	4	6	8	2
8	4	3	6	2	5	7	9	1
4	3	1	7	5	2	8	6	9
7	2	8	1	6	9	4	5	3
9	5	6	8	4	3	2	1	7

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/31

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

TOKYO PARKING LOTS Solution: 8 letters

M	A	N	A	G	E	N	W	O	T	N	W	O	D	G
E	U	M	V	D	L	S	S	S	P	A	C	E	E	N
C	N	O	E	E	L	L	H	L	R	R	O	O	M	I
H	D	V	H	Z	H	A	A	I	O	A	E	R	A	V
A	E	E	I	I	P	Z	N	W	F	S	M	O	N	R
N	R	E	C	R	A	U	D	E	E	T	E	P	D	E
I	G	R	L	E	O	E	E	L	S	F	I	E	S	S
C	R	U	E	T	D	N	I	N	S	I	S	N	F	N
A	O	T	S	U	R	B	M	O	I	L	E	I	G	O
L	U	C	C	P	O	R	T	E	O	L	L	N	A	C
E	N	U	L	M	O	D	E	R	N	H	C	G	R	R
V	D	R	O	O	L	A	C	K	A	T	Y	S	A	I
E	A	T	G	C	F	M	A	L	L	A	C	G	G	S
L	U	S	F	I	T	T	I	N	G	P	I	E	E	I
A	L	L	O	C	A	T	I	O	N	A	B	R	U	S

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Allocation, Area, Automobiles, Bicycles, Clog, Computerized, Conserving, Crisis, Crowded, Demand, Downtown, Environment, Fees, Fitting, Floor, Garage, Lack, Lanes, Level, Lift, Lineup, Mall, Manage, Mechanical, Modern, Move, Openings, Path, Plaza, Professional, Ramps, Room, Shifting, Space, Structure, Underground, Urban, Vehicles, Wall

Yesterday's Answer: Popped

We listened to your requests! TREASURY #6 is the first-ever Wonderword book containing only 20 x 20 puzzles, with 75 of these large puzzles. To order, send check or money order for $10.95 each plus $3.25 p&h ($14.20 total each, U.S. funds only) for the first volume, $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Wonderword, Universal Uclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo. 64106 or call toll-free 1-800-642-6480. Order online at upuzzles.com.

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of A. N. W., Minor Child, By: MEILI LI REYNOLDS, Petitioner.	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 09-0704 NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 19, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 205A, before Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 18th day of December, 2009.

/s/ Bernadita Sablan
Clerk of Court

JOE HILL, Esq.,
HILL LAW OFFICES
P.O. Box 500917, Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 234-6806 / 7743
Fax: (670) 234-7753

Attorney for Petitioner

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

LI CHUN CHEN, Petioner, Versus **XI HE BI,** Respondent.	FCD DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 09-0695 **SUMMONS**

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Petition for Divorce which is given you herewith, within thirty (30) days after service of this Summons upon you.

YOUR ANSWER SHOULD BE IN WRITING and filed with the Clerk of Court, Guma' Hustisia, Iimwal Aweewe, House of Justice, P.O. Box 500307, Saipan, MP 96950 and served upon petitioner's counsel, Atty. Joe Hill, P.O. Box 500917, Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to file an answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Petition for Divorce.

By order of the above Court:

Dated this 10th day of December, 2009.

/s/ Deputy Clerk of Court
Superior Court

FIESTA Resort & SPA SAIPAN
A TanHoldings Company

FIESTA RESORT & SPA SAIPAN
is looking for:

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- **Information Technology Manager**

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Owner and operator of High Speed Craft which operates between the islands of Tinian & Saipan is in need of the following positions:

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AND

One (1) Chief Engineer who holds a valid Panama License as Chief Engineer and must have at least three (3) years MTU Engine experience in Fast Craft.

Interested applicants should contact
Captain Antonio Sunga Jr.
(Operations Manager)
at phone no. 328-2214 / 328-2270 or email
at tinian.shipping@pticom.com.

Northern Mariana Islands RETIREMENT FUND

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

#JVA10-002 CLOSING DATE: **Until Filled**

The NMI Retirement Fund is seeking a professional and motivated individual to work in a busy and challenging office as a Legal Counsel for the Fund. Salary maximum is $70,000, depending on experience. Benefits are commensurate with the responsibilities assigned to the successful candidate and in compliance with CNMI laws.

Interested applicants must submit their application, resume, educational credentials, police, clearance as others as outlined in the JVA package. The complete package is available from the Fund, located on Capitol Hill, Saipan; or by e-mail from the Administrator. **Mailed and hand delivered packages must be marked "JVA10-002 Confidential," and must have the applicant's name and return address on the outside of the envelope.**

Mark Aguon, Administrator
NMI Retirement Fund
P.O. Box 501247
Saipan, MP 96950-1247
E-mail: administrator01@nmiretirement.com

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Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

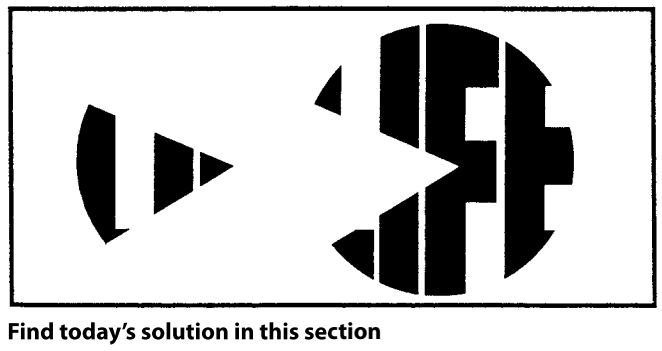
Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



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Find today's solution in this section

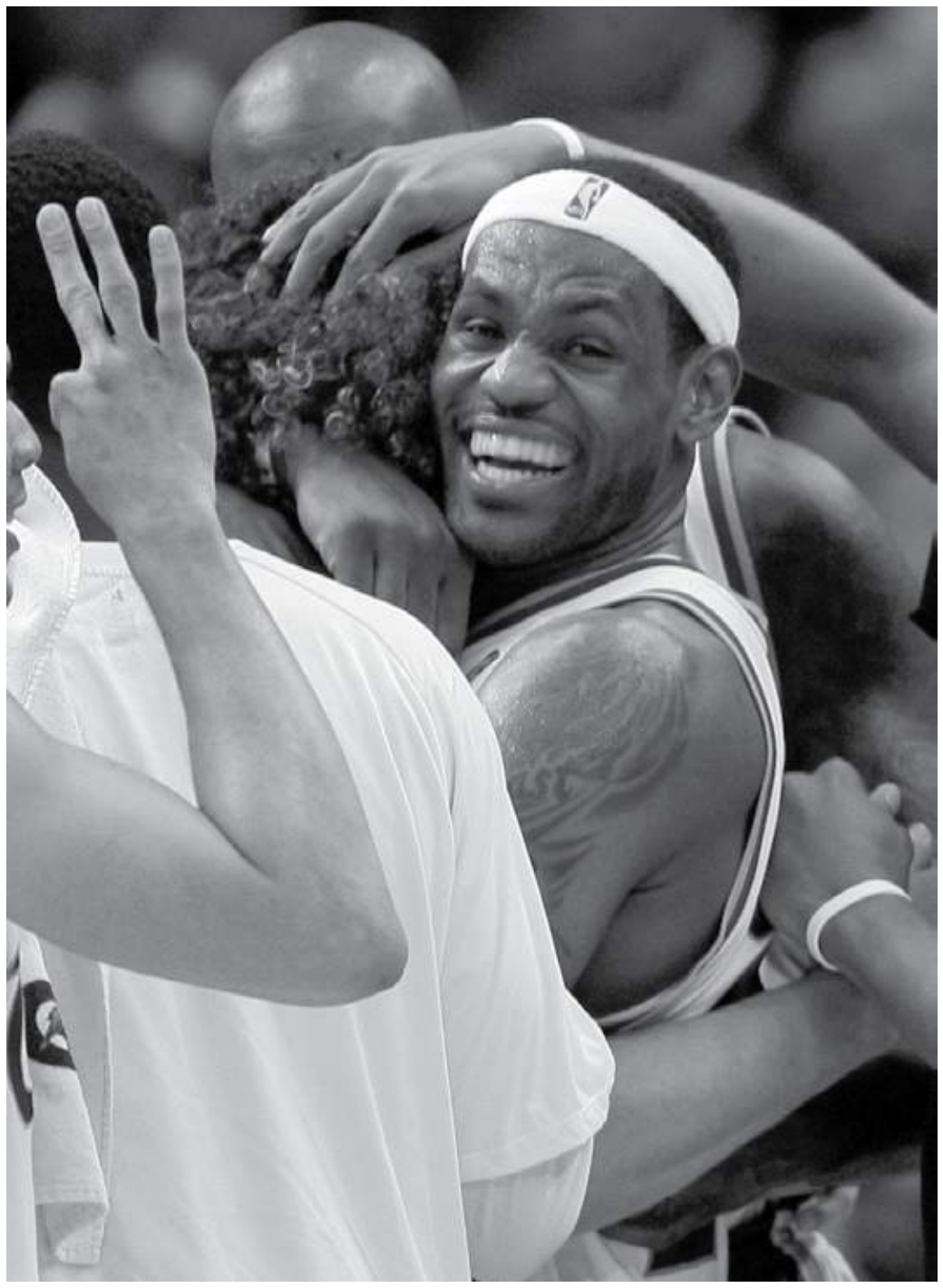
LeBron scores 48, Varejao hits winning 3 for Cavs

CLEVELAND (AP)—Anderson Varejao made his first career 3-pointer with 17.2 seconds left to celebrate Cavaliers teammate LeBron James' 25th birthday and give Cleveland a 106-101 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Wednesday for their 11th victory in 12 games.

James scored a season-high 48 points with 10 rebounds for the Cavs, who won their sixth straight and 11th in a row at home.

With the score tied at 101 and the 24-second shot clock down to its final tick, the ball wound up in the hands of Varejao, who missed his first 18 career 3-pointers. But the frizzy-haired Brazilian stepped up and drilled his long shot before James rushed into his arms.

Joe Johnson scored 35 for the Hawks, who were held to just 37 points in the second half.



AP

Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James (23) hugs Anderson Varejao, of Brazil, after Varejao made a 3-point basket in the fourth quarter in an NBA basketball game against the Atlanta Hawks on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2009, in Cleveland.

Suns 116, Celtics 98

At Phoenix, Amare Stoudemire and Channing Frye scored 26 points each as Phoenix handed what was left of Boston its third straight loss.

The Celtics were without injured Kevin Garnett and Paul Pierce in the final stop of what turned out to be an awful four-game road trip.

Eddie House led the Celtics with 19 points, going 5 of 7 on 3s. Ray Allen managed 15 points of 4 of 13 shooting.

Magic 117, Bucks 92

At Orlando, Florida, Vince Carter overcame a hard collision to score 25 points and rally Orlando past Milwaukee.

Carter was thrust under the courtside seats on a hard hit by Ersan Ilyasova late in the third quarter that gave Orlando a brief scare. The Magic's star shooting guard shook off the pain and never exited, igniting a 17-2 run that helped them pull away.

Dwight Howard had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Jason Williams added 16 points to help Orlando rebound from its Christmas Day loss to Boston.

Brandon Jennings had 20 points, and Andrew Bogut had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Bucks, who lost for the seventh time in their last eight games.

Raptors 107, Bobcats 103

At Toronto, Chris Bosh had 33 points and 13 rebounds, and Andrea Bargnani matched his season high with 28 points as Toronto beat Charlotte for its season-high fifth straight victory.

Marco Belinelli scored 13 points and rookie DeMar DeRozan had 10 as Toronto avenged its worst defeat of the season, a 116-81 loss at Charlotte on Nov. 25 — the biggest margin of victory in Bobcats history.

Stephen Jackson scored 30 points and Raymond Felton had 23 for the Bobcats, who are 1-14 on the road, the second-worst mark in the NBA.

Hornets 95, Heat 91

At New Orleans, David West scored six of his 21 points in the last 55 seconds as New Orleans held on to beat Miami.

Chris Paul had 18 points and nine assists, and Emeka Okafor had 15 points, 14 rebounds and a key block on Udonis Haslem in the final 30 seconds, helping the Hornets end a two-game skid and snap Miami's three-game winning streak.

Dwyane Wade scored 22 for the Heat, which trailed by 15 early in the fourth quarter but led 88-87 when Quentin Richardson tipped in Wade's missed jumper with 59 seconds to go.

Nets 104, Knicks 95

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Brook Lopez had 21 points and 14 rebounds as New Jersey posted a rare victory to snap a 10-game losing streak with a blowout of New York.

Yi Jianlian added 22 points, Chris Douglas-Roberts had 17 and Devin Harris had 17, eight assists and seven rebounds as New Jersey (3-29) ended its second double-digit losing streak of the season.

The Nets set an NBA record opening the season with 18 straight losses.

Reserve Al Harrington scored 25 to lead the Knicks, while David Lee added 24 points and 15 rebounds.

Grizzlies 121, Pacers 110

At Indianapolis, Rudy Gay scored 31 points to lead Memphis over Indiana, the Pacers' eighth straight loss.

Zach Randolph had 28 points and 13 rebounds, and Marc Gasol added 21 points and 10 boards for the Grizzlies.

Former Pacer Jamaal Tinsley scored three points in 15 minutes for Memphis. It was his first game in Indiana since the Pacers waived him this past summer.

Luther Head tied a career high with 30 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and Roy Hibbert added a career-best 25 points and 13 rebounds for the Pacers.

Jazz 107, Timberwolves 103

At Minneapolis, Deron Williams had 21 points and 12 assists as Utah avoided an embarrassing third consecutive loss to lowly Minnesota.

The Timberwolves trailed by 17 with 4:30 remaining, but cut the deficit to three after a pair of 3-pointers by Kevin Love with about 35 seconds left.

Trail Blazers 103, Clippers 99

At Portland, Oregon, Brandon Roy had 25 points, seven rebounds and six assists as Portland beat Los Angeles despite losing LaMarcus Aldridge to a sprained left ankle in the first quarter.

Martell Webster added 15 points, Jerryd Bayless had 14 and rookie Jeff Pendergraph had eight points and 14 rebounds for the Blazers, who have won four in a row and seven of eight against the Clippers.

Chris Kaman had 25 points and nine rebounds for the Clippers, and Eric Gordon added 24 points. Rasual Butler scored 15 and Baron Davis had 12 points and 11 assists.

76ers 116, Kings 106

At Sacramento, California, Lou Williams scored 22 points and Allen Iverson had 20 as Philadelphia pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat Sacramento.

Donte Greene and Omri Casspi each scored 21 points for the Kings. Jason Thompson had 15 points and 11 rebounds, and Sergio Rodriguez also scored 15 points.

Lakers' Bryant won't let injuries slow him

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kobe Bryant hasn't been trapped in a fancy Los Angeles building and surrounded by vicious enemies led by a brilliant German since the last time Dirk Nowitzki and the Dallas Mavericks visited Staples Center.

Still, the Los Angeles Lakers' unbreakable star was only half-joking recently when he said he was Bruce Willis—you know, the "Die Hard" star famed for playing action heroes who can't be stopped, no matter the odds or injuries stacked against them.

With a broken index finger on his shooting hand, a strained elbow and several additional woes that have come and gone this season, Bryant is persevering through an uncommon spate of significant injuries without missing a game for the defending NBA champions.

"Injuries don't affect me," he said. "I'm not going to sit here and say I've got a (bad) knee, I've got a (bad) finger. I'm fine. I'm more than fine. I always keep playing."

Bryant's season-high 44-point performance in a 124-118 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday propelled him past Denver's Carmelo Anthony into the overall NBA scoring lead with 30.4 points per game. He has averaged more than 38 points over the Lakers' last five outings, starting with a win over the Oklahoma City Thunder last week in which he was elbowed in the jaw before coming uncomfortably close to a major knee injury as he dropped 40 on them.

What's more, Bryant is doing all this shooting and dribbling with an avulsion fracture—a fragment of bone torn away by a tendon or ligament—in his index finger, the most important digit for controlling his shot. He plays wearing a soft white protective padding that appears to be one of Mickey Mouse's fingers, and he sometimes resorts to left-handed shots in tough situations, using the ambidextrous shooting skills he has practiced since childhood.

"I don't know how he does what he does," Lakers forward Lamar Odom said. "I've never seen him have trouble adjusting because of injuries. It's one thing to play through an injury, but to play at the level he does with the injuries he has, it's crazy. We aren't surprised by anything now."

Bryant's biggest worry about his broken finger was its effect on his free throws, which rely most heavily on his touch. Yet he made 16 without a miss in the win over Golden State on Tuesday, blowing away Warriors coach Don Nelson.

"That guy is amazing," Nelson said. "To be able to shoot like he did with the finger problems that he has on his shooting hand, it's amazing. I love watching him play, and it's always a pleasure to coach against him."

Yet Bryant doesn't want to hear any praise or credit for his effort. He rarely talks about his injuries except when pestered by the media, and he reacts almost angrily to suggestions he's doing something remarkable.

"Man, stop asking me about injuries," he said with mock indignation. "You think I'm not going to play? I'm fine. ... It's just a different technique to shoot the ball."

Bryant had two scares last week in that win over Oklahoma City, and the elbow to his face from Russell Westbrook wasn't even the worst: Staples Center went silent with fear when Bryant's left knee bent back awkwardly on landing. The play worried coach Phil Jackson, who saw Karl Malone get a serious knee injury on a similar play, yet Bryant came back after a timeout and finished the game, attributing his ligaments' survival to luck and a natural flexibility.

Bryant's most recent injury was a strained right elbow, which occurred in the second half of a double-overtime victory against the Sacramento Kings one night after the Christmas flop. He played through the pain of what he believes was a stinger, but his entire arm below the elbow went numb in the process, making his late-game 3-pointers to beat the Kings even more impressive.

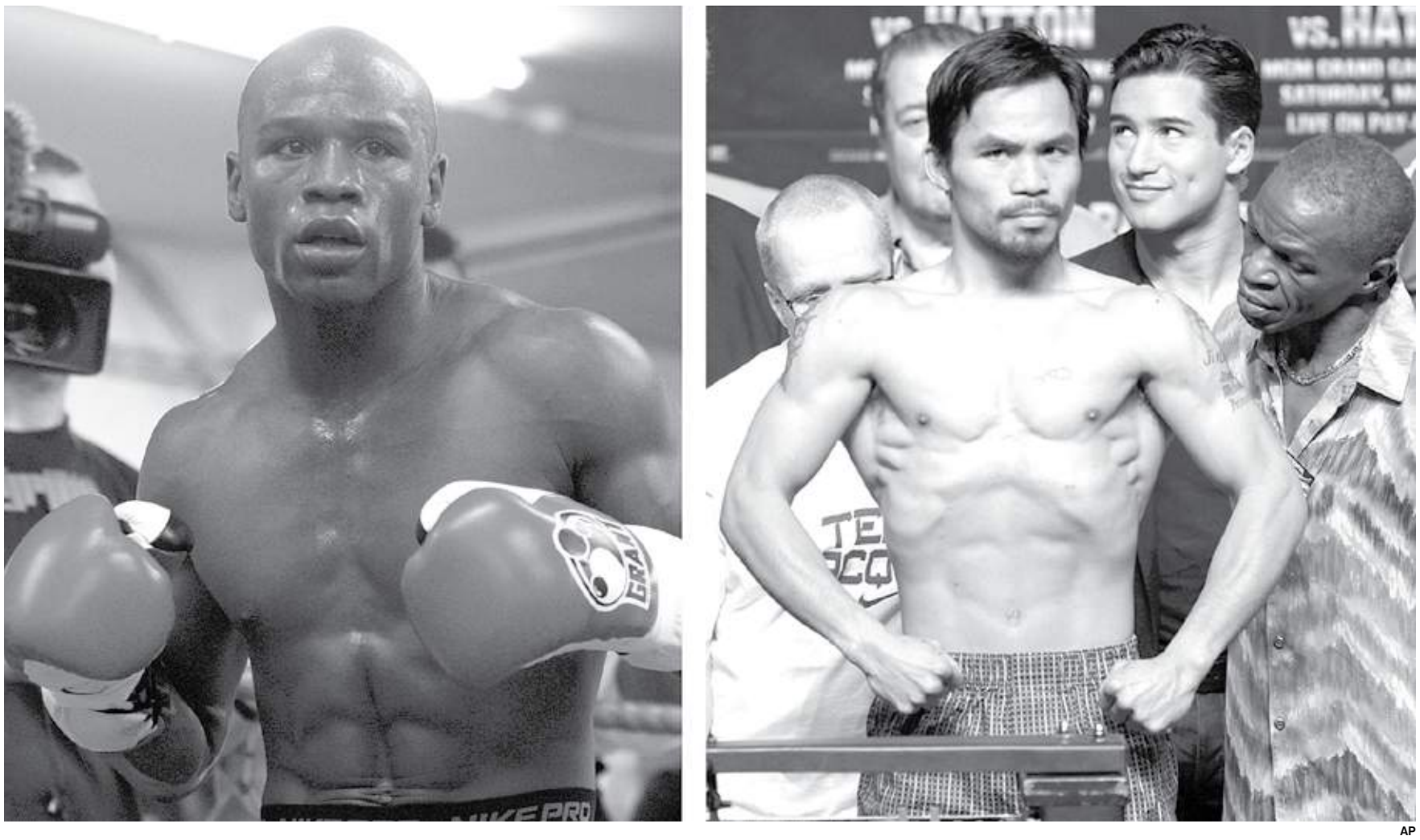
Bryant has done this before. He tore a ligament in his right pinky finger in February 2008, but postponed corrective surgery until after the Beijing Olympics, playing through the pain from that injury and a dislocated ring finger nearly a year ago.

When nearly two years of basketball without a break culminated in the Lakers' 15th title last season, Bryant finally got an extended rest period—yet he also carried the Lakers early this season with his much-improved low-post game while Pau Gasol was sidelined by an injured hamstring. He has done more scoring with jumpers and drives in recent weeks, but has been even more offensively aggressive since breaking his finger against Minnesota on Dec. 11.

His teammates are no longer surprised by their die-hard leader.

"It takes more than a broken finger to keep him out," point guard Derek Fisher said. "A wide receiver in the NFL with that injury might be out for the year. Kobe needs his fingers just as much, and he keeps playing."

Pacquiao files suit against Mayweathers



AP

In this combination of file photos, U.S. boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, prepares to spar at a gym in east London on May 22, 2009, and Manny Pacquiao, right, of the Philippines, weighs in for the junior welterweight boxing match against British boxer Ricky Hatton, May 1, 2009, in Las Vegas.

BOXING

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Manny Pacquiao upped the ante Wednesday in his standoff with Floyd Mayweather Jr. by filing a lawsuit alleging that Mayweather and others defamed him by falsely accusing Pacquiao of using performance-enhancing drugs.

The suit filed in federal court in Las Vegas further complicates efforts to reach an agreement for a proposed March 13 fight between the two boxers. The fight has been stalled by demands by the Mayweather camp that both fighters submit to random blood and urine tests leading up to the bout.

Pacquiao claimed in the suit that he has never tested positive for any performance-enhancing drugs, but that Mayweather, his father and uncle, Oscar De La Hoya and Golden Boy Promotions chief Richard Schaefer embarked on a campaign to make people think he used drugs.

"The truth did not stop Mayweather and the others," the suit contends. "That is because they are motivated by ill will, spite, malice, revenge and envy."

Pacquiao's attorney, Dan Petrocelli, said his client could be out millions of dollars if boxing fans believe he used steroids or human growth hormone to win titles in seven weight classes.

"The damage to his reputation and lost business opportunities could be in the tens of millions of dollars," Petrocelli said.

The suit cites various interviews done by the defendants in which they intimated that Pacquiao's strength and power did not all come naturally. Among the interviews cited was an October radio interview in which Mayweather Jr. allegedly said Pacquiao's physique was different "cause we know the Philippines got the best enhancing drugs."

Schaefer said the suit came as no surprise since Pacquiao had threatened it earlier in the week. He said his attorneys would respond to it, even as talks continue for the fight.

"I'm hearing these talks are being productive," Schaefer said. "Hopefully we will know something in the next couple of days."

Mayweather and Pacquiao had been expected to meet in what promises to be the richest fight ever after they reached agreement over everything from the size of their purses to the make of their gloves for the welterweight megafight. But a demand by Mayweather's camp for both fighters to be subjected to Olympic-style blood testing has stood in the way of a final agreement for the bout.

Talks over the last few days have centered on finding agreement on a date to stop blood testing before the fight, since Pacquiao believes that giving blood may weaken him, at least psychologically.

The lawsuit may not stand in the way of an agreement, but it adds to the increasing rancor between the two camps. In the suit, Pacquiao claims that comments by Mayweather, his father, Floyd Sr., and trainer, Roger Mayweather, were part of a defamation campaign against him.

"Mayweather Jr. and the others set out on a course designed to destroy Pacquiao's career, reputation, honor and legacy and jeopardize his ability to earn the highest levels of compensation," the suit contends.

212 in NFL would have lesser free agency if no cap

NFL

WASHINGTON (AP)—Miles Austin of the Cowboys, Brandon Marshall of the Broncos and six other Pro Bowl picks are among more than 200 NFL players who would lose their status as unrestricted free agents this offseason if the league and its union can't agree on a new labor contract.

According to a list obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday, there are 212 players who would be considered restricted free agents—instead of unrestricted—if there is no salary cap in 2010. There is at least one player from each of the NFL's 32 teams on the list.

Pro Bowl linebackers Elvis Dumervil of the Broncos and DeMeco Ryans of the Texans are in the group of potentially affected players. So are dozens of other starters from across the NFL, including quarterbacks Kyle Orton of the Broncos and Jason Campbell of the Redskins.

"Free agency's always been something for the players, always been a great thing. If you get one crack at free agency as a player, that's what you dream of," Orton said before Denver practiced Wednesday. "How it stands right now ... guys aren't going to be able to have that dream, to be a free agent. That's a shame for the players, I think."

In an uncapped year, a player would need at least six years in the NFL, up from the current minimum of four years in the league, to be an unrestricted free agent able to sign with any team.

Dallas receiver Austin was aware his free agency status could change, but said he wouldn't consider his breakout season bad timing.

"I can't control any of that," he said. "I've just got to stay focused on the things I can control, and that's playing this week and playing hard."

The other players announced Tuesday as selections for this season's Pro Bowl who could find themselves missing out on a chance to cash in this offseason are Packers safety Nick Collins, Patriots guard Logan Mankins, Saints guard Jahri Evans and Eagles fullback Leonard Weaver.

In addition to the NFL's sacks leader (Dumervil), and the NFC's leader in yards receiving (Austin), other prominent names on the list include Chargers linebacker Shawne Merriman, Jets receiver Braylon Edwards, Colts safety Antoine Bethea, Dolphins running back Ronnie Brown and Patriots kicker Stephen Gostkowski.

"If you're a guy that's been in the league a long time, and you know you're pretty much set, you probably have a different opinion about it. But if you're a guy that's in my position, it's going to affect us not just short term but long term," Washington's Campbell said.

If they lose out on the chance to become unrestricted free agents this offseason, players might not get as big a payoff as they could have been expecting. They also won't have the luxury of moving freely anywhere in the league.

A restricted free agent's old club gets a chance to offer the player a one-year contract at different levels of pay which determine what level of draft-choice compensation the old club would receive for losing the player. And the old club has the right to match any offer another club makes to a restricted free agent.

"If you're a free agent, of course you've got a lot of options, but if you're a restricted free agent, it's pretty much the team's choice, depending on what they want to do," Campbell said.

Other rules changes would go into effect if there is no salary cap in 2010. There would be no minimum or maximum amounts teams could spend on payroll, and each club would get an extra "transition player" tag. A "transition player" must be offered a minimum of the average of the top 10 salaries of the prior season at the player's position or 120 percent of the player's previous year's salary, whichever is greater.

"All of a sudden, your rules change," said Campbell, one of seven Redskins players on the list. "That's the situation I've been dealt and so have other guys on the team."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	23	8	.742	–
Toronto	16	17	.485	8
New York	12	20	.375	11 1/2
Philadelphia	9	22	.290	14
New Jersey	3	29	.094	20 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	23	8	.742	–
Atlanta	21	10	.677	2
Miami	16	13	.552	6
Charlotte	12	18	.400	10 1/2
Washington	10	20	.333	12 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	26	8	.765	–
Chicago	12	17	.414	11 1/2
Milwaukee	12	18	.400	12
Detroit	11	20	.355	13 1/2
Indiana	9	22	.290	15 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	22	9	.710	–
San Antonio	18	11	.621	3
Houston	19	13	.594	3 1/2
Memphis	15	16	.484	7
New Orleans	14	16	.467	7 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	20	12	.625	–
Portland	21	13	.618	–
Utah	18	13	.581	1 1/2
Oklahoma City	17	14	.548	2 1/2
Minnesota	7	26	.212	13 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	25	6	.806	–
Phoenix	21	12	.636	5
Sacramento	14	17	.452	11
L.A. Clippers	13	18	.419	12
Golden State	9	22	.290	16

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Bryant, LAL	31	349	210	941	30.4
Anthony, DEN	32	331	272	961	30.0
Durant, OKC	31	297	244	880	28.4
James, CLE	33	328	225	934	28.3
Wade, MIA	28	259	210	750	26.8
Ellis, GOL	31	313	149	791	25.5
Nowitzki, DAL	30	277	188	765	25.5
Bosh, TOR	32	258	229	751	23.5
Roy, POR	32	258	168	731	22.8
Arenas, WAS	30	237	145	680	22.7
Johnson, ATL	30	245	100	636	21.2
Gay, MEM	28	220	117	577	20.6
Evans, SAC	28	212	130	569	20.3
Stoudemire, PHX	32	246	157	649	20.3
Kaman, LAC	30	250	100	600	20.0
Randolph, MEM	30	241	114	599	20.0
Williams, UTA	28	204	115	557	19.9
Duncan, SAN	27	212	110	534	19.8
Boozer, UTA	30	235	116	586	19.5
Jennings, MIL	29	208	92	565	19.5

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
Perkins, BOS	142	219	.648
Howard, ORL	167	269	.621
Gasol, MEM	170	278	.612
Horford, ATL	173	295	.586
Lee, NYK	239	411	.582
Hilario, DEN	165	287	.575
Millsap, UTA	129	226	.571
O'Neal, MIA	139	244	.570
Landry, HOU	187	329	.568
Stoudemire, PHX	246	440	.559

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, ORL	30	113	288	401	13.4
Noah, CHI	29	117	236	353	12.2
Wallace, CHA	28	61	273	334	11.9
Camby, LAC	29	86	247	333	11.5
Randolph, MEM	30	143	198	341	11.4
Bosh, TOR	32	103	256	359	11.2
Lee, NYK	31	76	260	336	10.8
Boozer, UTA	30	60	260	320	10.7
Haywood, WAS	30	125	185	310	10.3
Duncan, SAN	27	81	196	277	10.3

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, PHX	32	360	11.3
Paul, NOR	21	224	10.7
Williams, UTA	28	280	10.0
Rondo, BOS	30	290	9.7
Kidd, DAL	31	284	9.2
James, CLE	33	260	7.9
B. Davis, LAC	30	232	7.7
Westbrook, OKC	31	218	7.0
Arenas, WAS	30	207	6.9
Duhon, NYK	31	200	6.5

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Heo notches Junior ITF ranking points

Last year was a breakout year for CNMI junior netter Ji Hoon Heo.

He competed in 12 singles and 12 doubles tournaments in five countries and more importantly gained Junior ITF ranking points, a first for a Commonwealth player. Heo's tournaments in 2009 matched the combined number of off-island singles events he competed in from 2006 to 2008. His 12 doubles events last year were more than the five he posted in a three-year span.

Ji Hoon Heo, seen here going for a backhand return during a local tournament, gained Junior ITF ranking points in 2009.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Heo earned 10 rankings points in a doubles event in Canterbury, New Zealand in January, five in a singles tournament in New Caledonia in June, and 15 in another singles meet in Fiji in August. The CNMI netter also joined tournaments in Australia and South Korea, capping his domination in the Pacific Oceania region with a title win in the boys' 18-and-under division of the 2009 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji.

In the POJC, the CNMI carried the cudgels for the North team, which was pitted against the East and West squads. The Commonwealth sent eight players in Fiji, the most by the CNMI in years, with Thea and Theecel Minor, Jodel Fernandez, Rafael Jones, Christian Miller, Benjie Decena, and Melody Johnson joining Heo on the team.

CNMI strikers gain international exposure

The CNMI Women's National Team played in its first international tournament through the East Asian Football Federation Women's Football Championship 2010 Semifinals Competition.

The tournament was played at the Tainan County Stadium, in Tainan County, Taiwan in August and also featured teams from Guam, Hong Kong, South Korea, and host Chinese-Taipei.

The CNMI's female strikers debuted against Guam and Carrie Knight gave the Commonwealth its first goal in an EAFF tournament. Guam eventually won the match, 1-5. The CNMI went on to drop its three other games.

Five months before the tournament in Taiwan, the CNMI also competed in the East Asian Football Championship 2010 Preliminary Competition in Guam. The CNMI Men's National team lost all its three matches in the EAFF qualifier, but scored at least one goal in each game.

In both tournaments, the CNMI was coached by former Japanese pro player Sugao Kambe, who arrived on Saipan early last year and made significant contributions to the development of football in the Commonwealth.

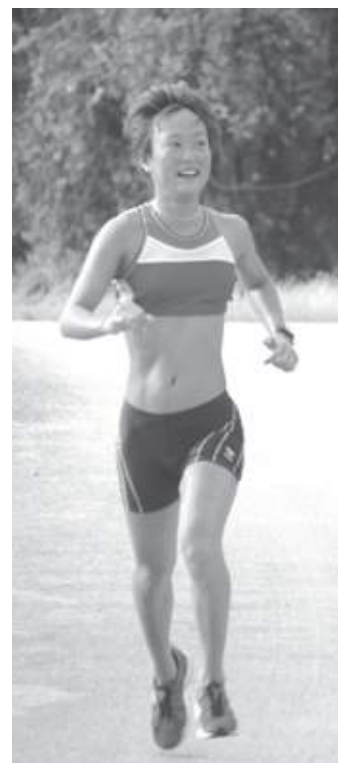
WWW.EAFF.COM

Members of the CNMI Women's National Team pose for a group photo before their first game in the East Asian Football Federation Women's Football Championship 2010 Semifinals Competition at the Tainan County Stadium, in Tainan County, Taiwan in August.

WWW.EAFF.COM

The CNMI's Nick Swaim goes for a header during their game against Guam in the East Asian Football Championship 2010 Preliminary Competition at the Leo Palace Resort in Guam in March.

Mieko conquers XTERRA Japan



SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Mieko Carey, seen here in a local triathlon event, topped XTERRA Japan in August and competed as a pro for the first time in XTERRA World in Hawaii in October.

Saipan triathlete Mieko Carey's campaign in XTERRA Tour in 2009 was a fruitful one.

She first competed in XTERRA Saipan and finished fourth behind three pros. Mieko's next stop was Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia where he placed second to five-time XTERRA Saipan Championship winner Renata Bucher.

A few months before the ultimate triathlon event of the year, XTERRA World, Mieko was in Marunuma and this time finished first in XTERRA Japan. She completed the 1.2-kilometer swim, 25-km mountain bike race, and 10-km run in three hours, 16 seconds to beat Australian pro Kylee Lock by less than four minutes.

To cap 2009, Mieko joined XTERRA World in Hawaii and for the first time she competed in the annual event as a pro. Mieko had record-breaking performance in Maui timing in at 3:35:44 to eclipse her 2008 time of 3:53:38.

'The Crank' strikes gold in Japan

While Saipan-based mixed martial arts fighters put on a show in local events, U.S.-based Frank "The Crank" Camacho made the CNMI proud in international tournaments.

Camacho was in Tokyo in November for the 2009 Japan Asian Jiu Jitsu Grappling Championships and won a gold medal in the adult blue belt's meiopesado (medium-heavyweight class), besting stablemate Hadrian Torres and Strapple North's Kota Matsunaga.

The Purebred Lloyd Irvin and Trench Tech fighter first dueled the Japanese bet and lost. He then challenged Torres and won to earn a rematch against Matsunaga. In the finals, Camacho avenged his loss to Matsunaga en route to a gold-medal win.

In July, Camacho competed in Grapplers Quest 2009 U.S. Nationals/All-Star Pro Challenge in Morristown, New Jersey and advanced to the blue belt absolute division (open weight class) finals before bowing to teammate D.J. Jackson. Camacho then placed third in the blue belt cruiserweight (180 to 189 lbs).

Frank "The Crank" joins two other winners in the medal podium during the awards ceremony for the Grapplers Quest 2009 U.S. Nationals/All-Star Pro Challenge in Morristown, New Jersey, in July.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Micro Cup canoe race returns

After two years, the biggest canoe racing competition in the region returned to Saipan, as the CNMI hosted the 11th Micronesian Cup in October in the waters off Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

The last time the Commonwealth hosted the Micro Cup was in 2006 with Poksai of Guam winning the women's division and CNMI's own, Saipan Outrigger Canoe Club topping the men's event. Hong Kong ruled the mixed event.

Last year, teams from Guam, Palau, CNMI, Japan, and Hong Kong competed in the two-day tournament. Poksai of Guam prevailed in the women's division, while SOCC regained the men's overall title it lost to Hong Kong in 2008. Animun Tasi Metgot of Guam won the mixed event.

Olympian graces Marianas Cup

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Phil Dalhausser, left, blocks a Japanese pro beach volleyball player during their exhibition game for the 17th Marianas Cup Beach Volleyball Festival in March 2009 at the Pacific Islands Club sand court.

Several beach volleyball tournaments were played in the CNMI in 2009, but none equaled the 17th Marianas Cup Beach Volleyball Festival on the Pacific Island Club sandcourt.

The three-day event held in March featured the island's best and some visitors from Japan and Korea, but what made the Marianas Cup a tournament to look forward to every year was the presence of pro players from the U.S.

Phil Dalhausser, a 6'9" behemoth who won the gold medal win in the 2008 Beijing Olympics where he teamed up with Todd Rogers, made his fourth stint at the Marianas Cup. He joined forces with another Marianas Cup returnee and AVP player Paul Baxter and they won in an exhibition game against Japanese pros.

Two more AVP players, Jenn Snyder, and Jenelle Koester, also returned to Saipan last year for the Micro Cup and defeated Korean pros in an exhibition match.

In the tournament proper, Baxter was paired with Hugo Dooner and they downed Dalhausser and Tyce Mister in the finals. In the women's finals, Japanese Yoko Miki and Chie Iwana prevailed over Daniela Gitteli and Federica Tonon.

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Metgot (in red uniform) and Poksai are in a close race in the 12-mile event in the 11th Micronesian Cup outrigger canoe competition held in October in the waters off Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

Historic World Series stint

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI Junior All-Stars pose for a group photo after ruling the Asia Pacific Regional Tournament in Indonesia in July.

The CNMI Junior All-Stars were the lone Commonwealth team to make it to the 2009 World Series at the Heritage Park in Taylor, Michigan.

The Thelma Mizer-managed Junior All-Stars won two games in the World Series, making them the winningest CNMI Junior All-Star Team in the annual event. The Commonwealth was in the World Series from 2001 to 2005 and compiled a 3-18 record, but none of those first five teams managed to win more than one game. In 2009, after the CNMI bets broke the three-year spell, the CNMI Junior All-Stars won over Italy, 13-2, and against Canada, 11-9, before losing to Puerto Rico, 1-11, and falling short of advancing to the semi-finals. Mizer's wards finished the tournament with a 2-2 slate, as they also bowed to Aruba in the second game, 3-5.

The CNMI's victory over Canada in its third game was the Commonwealth' s first since 2002. The CNMI's three wins in its World Series trips from 2001 to 2005 were all against teams from Europe.

The CNMI Junior All-Stars are composed of Christian Mizer, Jeremy and Henry Rabauliman, Lamarc Iguel, Frankie Camacho, Ricardo Dela Cruz, Aldelbert Lizama, Brian Camacho, Alan Aguon, Jared Sablan, Patrick Tenorio, Arthur Jebehn, Poland Masaharu, and Joseph Atalig. Oliver Secharmidal and Bernard Cabrera are the coach and assistant coach, respectively.

MAC champion

The CNMI Team ruled the 2009 Micronesian Athletics Championships in Queensland, Australia in August.

The Commonwealth sent 12 athletes to MAC and went home with 14 gold, seven silver, and eight bronze medals to dethrone Guam, which dominated the first three staging of the regional event. Guam collected only 11 gold, 12 silver, and six bronze medals.

MAC doubled as the Oceania Regional Championships, giving CNMI athletes an opportunity to race against some of the best in the region.

Winning gold medals for the CNMI were Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel, Lia Rangamar, Tyrone Omar, Yvonne Bennett, and Jacque Wonenberg. Other members of the CNMI team coached by Elias Rangamar were Trevor Ogumoro, Clayton Kenty, Douglas Dillay, Yvette Bennett, and Ryan Ichihara.

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Members of the CNMI team perform run drills a few days before heading to Australia for the 2009 Oceania Regional Championships /Micronesian Athletics Championships.

Swim records fall in Rome

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Cooper Graf, Shin Kimura, coach Hiro Kimura, Kai Staal, and Rezne Wong, seen here posing with the CNMI flag during a tournament in Guam, were in Rome in July for the 13th FINA World Championships.

Four CNMI swimmers came to Rome on a mission and made good of their promise breaking one record after another.

Kai Staal, Rezne Wong, Cooper Graf, and Shin Kimura competed in 20 events in the 13th FINA World Championships and posted four CNMI National records, 18 personal best times, and eight age group marks.

Staal timed in at 25.06 seconds in the 50m freestyle for a new CNMI National and age group marks (15 to 16 age group). His three other age group records are 31.90 seconds in the 50m breaststroke, 28.04 seconds in the 50 butterfly, and 29.75 seconds in the 50m backstroke.

Wong set four personal best times, three age group marks, and three CNMI National records. His 31.62 seconds in the 50m breaststroke is a PBT, age group mark, and CNMI record. He did the same in the 100m (1:08.79) and 200m breaststroke (2:26.83) swims. Wong another PBT was in the 50m freestyle (25.34 seconds).

Graf went 4-for-4 in PBTs and logged one age group mark in the 15 to 16 division. He had PBTs in the 100m freestyle, 200m freestyle , 800m freestyle, and 50 butterfly (30.11). His time in the 800m freestyle is also a new age group mark.

Kimura earned three PBTs in four events. His PBTs came in the 100m freestyle, 200m freestyle, and 800m freestyle.

Science lesson

Cosmic rays slam into the top of Earth's atmosphere, blasting the nucleai of gases to create particles called mu-mesons.

In the life of a mu-meson, it takes 4.5 microseconds to travel from the top of the atmosphere to the Earth's surface. To an observer on the ground, the time lasts 200 microseconds.

Due to the relative motion between the observer and the observed, the same event takes two different times. It's a matter of perspective. Two completely different and opposing answers are correct to a simple question.

If science proves how relative everything is to the observer, then why is analyzing human behavior anything different? Truly, we see others thru our own eyes, framing the world with our own well-developed biases fraught with misjudgments and miscalculations.

We can apply this mini science lesson to two stories from last weekend involving coaches who could be accused of throwing in the towel: Jim Caldwell and Urban Meyer.

The here-to-fore undefeated Indianapolis Colts yanked their starters after they were leading the Jets in the third quarter. This weekend, expect the Patriots, Chargers, and other teams locked into playoff slots to rest their starters without the outrage that came when Peyton Manning got sent to the pine. The difference of course is that the Colts were chasing perfection and history.

Did head honcho Caldwell do the right thing? Most ticket-buying fans didn't think so. Many pundits also differed with the move. I am not aware of any evidence that proves resting starters is the best way to head into the playoffs. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. The only time Manning led the Colts to a Super Bowl victory was when he played entire games thru Week 17. The seasons he was rested, the Colts failed to win the Super Bowl.

As Herm Edwards said, "Hello! You play to win the game!"

All season you strive to develop winning ways. Giving up seems the wrong way to prepare to win. And players are no more likely to be injured in the first quarter than they are in the fourth quarter.

From the viewpoint of this observer, Caldwell erred by not trying to win that game although I can certainly understand his thinking. If the Colts do not win the championship this season, the line forms behind me in saying, "I told you so." If the Colts do win it all, then hopefully you will forget these words.

The other rather controversial call was Gator's coach Urban Meyer calling it quits six days before the Sugar Bowl and five years before the end of his contract. Questions abound about the timing of his announcement. Why not make the announcement after the bowl game? If he has serious health issues, then why did he change his mind the next day? How bad is his heart? Why didn't he take a vacation like the rest of us?

As a Gator, however, what Meyer did doesn't bother me at all since I'm just glad he's coming back.

For most of my life, I've had a burning desire to know and understand as much as possible and in the process have acquired a treasure trove of facts, most of them useless. At the same time I've also developed a greater appreciation, and reluctant acknowledgement, of the paradoxes, contradictions, enigmas, conundrums, and ambiguities that not only exist but flourish in our everyday world, everywhere from mu-mesons to head coaches.

OFF THE BENCH

By BOB COLDEEN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

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SPORTS STORY OF THE YEAR

Giants descend on Saipan

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The biggest show that hit the CNMI in 2009—literally and figuratively—was the FIBA Oceania Basketball Tournament played at the Marianas High School and Gilbert C. Ada gymnasiums in June.

The Commonwealth had never hosted a regional caging of this magnitude before bringing to Saipan the powerhouse team of Australia and two other perennial FIBA Oceania contenders, New Caledonia and New Zealand and eventual men's division third placer Guam.

The MHS and Ada gyms instantly became the land of the giants with Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia's big men towering over CNMI and Guam cagers.

Australia brought a 7'0" center on Saipan and several players standing above 6'5." New Caledonia had a pair of Twin Towers in Rodrigue Tetainanuarii and Benoit Weber, while New Zealand's frontliners were also no pushovers.

In the women's division, New Zealand and Australia also had advantage in ceiling over three other teams.

With these behemoths in town, CNMI basketball fans, who are not used to seeing giants on the court, witnessed several games played above the rim. Australia' Jeromie Hill, Cameron Bairstow, and Jan Warbout wowed the crown with their dunks, while New Caledonia's big, but mobile big men showed fans what a physical inside game was all about.

New Zealand and Guam's cagers also had their moments in the show, escaping past defenders in well-run fastbreak plays, while their cagebelles were as smooth as silk in knocking down jumpers.

The CNMI Men's Nationals lost all four games in the elimination round, but still displayed their offensive talent and ability to run the floor. Young gun Jericho Cruz held his own against the four other teams' top scorers and was named as one of the outstanding players in the tournament.

The youthful CNMI Women's Nationals were way below the level of play of their counterparts, but the exposure in the regional tournament was what they need to reach that competitive point.

The Oceania caging was played for six days with Australia sweeping the two gold medals, beating New Caledonia in the men's finals, 62-44, and New Zealand, 68-45, in the women's title game.

Besides the Oceania cagers, Saipan also had visitors from FIBA World. FIBA World president Bob Elphinston and FIBA World secretary general and International Olympic Committee member Patrick Baumaan were on Saipan for a couple of days to watch games and attend the FIBA Oceania Congress.

Elphinston, who will serve as FIBA World president only until this year, returned to his old post, as he was unanimously elected president of FIBA Oceania for 2010-2014 during the FIBA Oceania Congress in June last year.

New Caledonia's Rodrigue Tetainanuarii pulls up for a jumper and towers above the CNMI's Quincy Johnson and Oscar Ada during their game in the 2009 FIBA Oceania Basketball Tournament at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium in June.

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